

STREET ANGELS

PAUL BLAKEY MBE
AND FRIENDS



Dedication

This book is dedicated to every person who has (or will in the future) be involved in one of our night-time projects.

Those who volunteer on the streets or safe place drop-in;
prayer partners; financial support; trustee or steering group member
– the time and resources you invest is making the difference.

This is your story and we thank you for your part in it!

Written and compiled by Paul Blakey MBE
with contributions as referenced

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All names of those helped have been changed

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Introduction

For me, this story demonstrates what can be achieved, when people who care, are equipped and supported to go and do just that!

From the beginning with a heartfelt decision and response to simply “give it a go” to a movement of ordinary people who are passionate and dedicated in seeing communities go from binge to better; we invite you to share the story!

It has been a tremendous privilege to be part of the story and journey of Street Angels. All involved continue to be amazed that God has and continues to use us in this way.

Part of this movement has been to join the dots of what God has motivated people to do across the UK and beyond. ‘NightLight’ in Belfast was the first (that we know of), night-time initiative: a table serving tea, coffee, hot chocolate and biscuits in the heart of Belfast city centre’s club land. ‘Church for the Night’ in Bournemouth and ‘Street Chaplains’ in Dundee have also both been running for over a decade with amazing results. ROC Angels (and CNI Network from 2008 - 2022) has not only helped new projects to start, it has linked with what was already happening and together formed a network of people making the difference for others and the wider community.

We hope that you enjoy the few pages that we have pulled together: a story that every volunteer, every supporter, every person we have helped and everyone who has prayed, is part of in some way.

As we update this book we are amazed at how much has happened in just over a year! This is a story that is continually developing and growing. Reports that alcohol related violence and alcohol related A&E admissions are reducing year on year in the UK is part of this story and this cultural change is proof that volunteers are amazing!

Welcome to the movement from binge to better...

Paul Blakey

August 2013 – updated November 2014

Foreword – Right Reverend Tony Robinson, Bishop of Wakefield and former Patron of Street Angels – CNI Network (CNI Network operated from 2008 - 2022)

Street Angels is the story of ordinary Christians putting the command to 'love your neighbour' into practice. They show through many hours of voluntary work on the streets of our towns and cities that we can still make a difference in our communities.

Much of the news we hear about night life in our towns and cities is about unsocial behaviour and violence. So it is heartening to be able to read this story which, though not in any way diminishing the impact of harsh realities, tells of faith, hope and love.

This simple idea started seventeen years ago in Northern Ireland, twelve years ago in Dundee and seven years ago in England and in that time it has seen crime reduced, lives changed, volunteers equipped and communities transformed on a weekly basis. Under the national Christian Nightlife Initiative, all one hundred and twenty projects link together under one banner which has now been recognised by the Prime Minister with a Big Society Award.

Paul has been crucial to founding and driving Street Angels and this book is a valuable record of how it has developed and what has been achieved.

I hope others will read this book and be inspired to think about volunteering to be a Street Angel in their nearest community. Just a few hours a month will help to make our towns safer for all those out to enjoy themselves in our pubs and clubs and other local people feel more secure.

May Street Angels go from strength to strength for many years to come.

*Tony Robinson
Bishop of Wakefield*

August 2013

Part 1:

The Beginning.....

Street Angels - the Beginning

The story of Street Angels starts with a very dangerous question - *“what are the needs in our town and what can we, as the church, do to meet those needs?”* This question was asked as part of an action group from Churches Together in Halifax at a meeting with Revd. Steve Croft (at the time he was the Archbishop of Canterbury’s advisor on Fresh Expressions of Church). Keen to make better use of a cafe base in the town centre, which Churches Together were running in partnership with Halifax YMCA, the question led to forming the action group that led to a meeting that led to the first project; Street Angels.

Rewind a few months and I was prompted to see first-hand the issues and problems in Halifax town centre on Friday and Saturday nights. Taking my then girlfriend Jean on romantic moonlit strolls (at least that is my version), around Halifax town centre on weekend nights shows us the extent of the issues and problems. As is generally the case, perception was far worse than the reality! At this time, Halifax had a reputation as the ‘Wild West of West Yorkshire’ with between six and twelve thousand drinkers visiting the town centre each Friday and Saturday night. The town was geared for the ‘binge drink culture’ with drinks at 50p and more pubs and clubs per square mile than any other town or city in the UK. Violence, sexual assaults, under-age drinking and many people becoming vulnerable seemed to be the norm on weekend evenings.

Seeing the needs first hand, Jean and I knew we had to do something, but were unsure as to what! The Churches Together action group and meeting was the obvious place and so after a suggestion, the group tasked Jean and myself with finding out more. A week later, during the first week of November 2005, I shared the idea with Sergeant Dave Apsee of the Halifax Neighbourhood Policing Team; (we were both at the Halifax Town Centre Forum meeting). Dave was very excited at the prospect and asked if he could arrange a meeting during the next week. Five of us, Lesley Cheetham from Halifax Parish Church, Steve Tipping from King’s Church, John Hoyle from Halifax Methodist Circuit, Jean and myself, met with Dave a week later.

He shared with us some of the different initiatives taking part across the UK with the church as the lead partner. He talked about the ‘Festival:Manchester event’ and the zero crime rate on one of the worst council estates in the UK. He talked about ‘Soul in the City’ in London and the amazing community transformation that had taken place. He told us that nationally the Police recognise that when the

church is involved amazing results happen and locally the Police wanted that for Calderdale!

He then offered us £1000 in cash (pause a moment to get over the shock) and a further £2000 in-kind towards training, town centre link radios, etc. Dave then laid down the gauntlet, he asked if we could launch in two weeks time, Friday 25th November 2005. This tied in with the change in the UK Licensing laws, with twenty four hour licensing (and drinking) introduced. The Police were keen to tackle this with a new approach to policing the night-time economy and wanted our project to be part of this.

With a strong faith, and the five of us committing to a six week trial, we said yes. We committed to opening up the cafe as a safe place for those who could or had become vulnerable every Friday and Saturday between 9pm and 3am up until New Years Eve. E-mails were sent out to churches, we shared the idea at various meetings including Churches Together (where people thought we would be killed or stabbed within a few hours), inviting people interested to turn up at Fairtrade Cafe at 9pm on 25th November. The local paper, Halifax Courier, ran the story on its front page - "Drop by if you're drunk" read the headline (*Halifax Evening Courier 23-11-2005*) and on Friday 25th November, we opened up the cafe ready for the 9pm start.

Amazingly, fifty people turned up at some stage of that first night; many of them saying God had challenged them to be involved in the night-time culture of our town centre. The concept of a safe place drop-in was not going to work as there were far too many people in the cafe. If anyone came in search of help, there was simply no room at the inn! So the idea of wandering patrols and looking out for people was suggested and, after talking to the Police, happened. Suggestions were made for a name and Street Angels seemed to be the favourite. Like many ideas, simplicity and a 'give it a go' attitude was the best way towards reality!

Early Stories:

Here is the report from our first night:

"We had an exciting first night in Fairtrade Cafe Nightlife project.

We attended the Police Briefing - the Sergeant and Inspector for the town shared how excited they are about this project, it has been discussed at Divisional level and also passed onto Yorkshire and Humber Local Government who are very favourable and want to be kept fully informed.

They also said they had £4000 funding available for the project - firstly for costs in running the project up to Christmas, then for long term. They also said the Acapulco Nightclub was to have a bucking bronco / rodeo bull night on Fri 16th December, with money going to the project.

The team went back to the cafe and then four of us went for a wander round town. We introduced ourselves to the manager of the Acapulco and thanked him. He was extremely in favour of the project, thought it was excellent and chatted for half an hour about his club, needs in the town, etc.

We wandered to the burger van and chatted with the lady and the bouncers at Yates.

The police were in and out of the cafe throughout the evening and we have a radio link set which links us to the police and nightclubs, door staff, etc.

Throughout the evening we wandered the streets praying, chatting with door staff at Coliseum and Jumping Jaks, talking to police and those out clubbing. Fluorescent jackets will be purchased today so we are easily identifiable and not just random strangers asking people if they are ok!!!

We had two people come in for help, the first, a girl whose phone had been stolen. We called the phone to assist her, calmed her down and phoned her a taxi home. She ran off before the taxi came, but we filled the police in about a situation we had seen her in earlier and they ensured us she was safe.

The second, a young lad of maybe sixteen / seventeen came in with a bleeding lip, had got separated from his friends, not been to Halifax before and wanted to go home. We phoned a taxi and saw him safely on his way.

The rest of the evening was quiet, we looked round town at nightclub closing time and the relatively few people in the Acapulco and on Commercial Street left safely, with not much queuing at taxi ranks. As we drove through town at 3am, the streets had emptied.” (25-11-2005)

The next day, we purchased as many yellow jackets as we could in the Halifax market, as we thought a visible uniform was an advantage to our work on the streets; (the stall owner wondered if Christmas had come a month early as we walked out with armfuls of jackets)! We laminated pieces of card and Velcro-ed these to the backs of the jackets. These were a far cry from the wonderfully professional printing and multitude of designs we have now. The low tech solution was effective and fast to implement and provided a novel game for the inebriated. The second night led to lots of ice breaking and connection with those out on the town as they tried to collect all the cards from the backs of each jacket. Surprisingly we were given them back at the end of the night!

Over the next six weekends, we continued to see that our work on the streets was needed. We accompanied elderly people, themselves vulnerable to the going's on of the town at night, from the Victoria Theatre to bus stops, cars and taxis. We helped people who were drunk and needed that helping hand and time to sober up before a taxi (or parent / friend) could be summoned to take them home.

Stories from those first few weeks include:

“Another amazing (second) weekend on the Nightlife project. On Friday we had a young girl who had fallen out with her friends on her way home to Cleckheaton and walked back into town. We ensured her safety whilst she was on the streets and then when she finally broke down we moved in and chatted with her, calmed her down and sorted her out a taxi home. She was very grateful.” (2-12-2005)

This lady had walked nine miles from the motorway junction along bleak unlit and rural roads in the drizzle into the town centre. She was upset and fairly vocal at first in telling us to go away (not quite that polite!) Only when she had no options seemingly available to get home did she sit down and begin to cry at the reality of her situation. As we walked her back to the cafe she was upset and angry and swore plenty and was verbally abusive to others passing by on the walk. As she entered our cafe she totally changed; I have never seen this before or since, but she went from a vulgar young woman to a very pleasant well spoken lady. She told us she was a solicitor and of her involvement in church as a teenager and

that she didn't quite know what she believed. As she left for her taxi home she said, in a very posh voice, "May God bless you all this Christmas!" Had the Police been the ones to encounter her first and had she behaved in the way she behaved with us; they may well have needed to report her to the Solicitors council, which could well have resulted in her losing her job. This lady showed me the power of what Street Angels is – prayer and action together – seeking change for individuals and the community.

The report continues: *"We also assisted the police in being a presence on Friday and Saturday outside the Victoria Theatre for the 'Carols and Brass' performance. We escorted elderly people to cars and waited with several for taxis, lift's home, etc.*

Early hours of Friday saw Street Angels helping clean up blood from a bust nose to enable a young lad to get home in a taxi. The Courier (local newspaper) were also with us and interviewed myself, Lesley and others.

On Saturday, we had six Street Angel volunteers patrolling the town centre and a team at the cafe. The volunteers at the cafe would busy themselves in making tea, coffee, soup and toast for visitors and colleagues and prayed for the safety of the Street Angels and for peace on the streets of Halifax. The Street Angel volunteers on the streets helped to assist the police in dealing with an argument between a girl and her boyfriend and then ensured her safety in getting home. We had the help of Catherine, one of the Ambassadors, which proved a great insight into radios, CCTV, etc... We also provided a safe place for a girl whose drink had been spiked, whilst the ambulance arrived.

People were again re-assured of the Street Angels creating a safer town and we had many good chats with clubbers as well as those working in town." (3-12-2005)

"Friday (third weekend) saw six people in need come into the cafe, with wide ranging needs. There were several fourteen year olds, too young to get into any of the pubs or nightclubs, and so needed a taxi home. A girl who had been found sprawled out on the road and needed to be sobered up before the police could find out where she lived. A young lady who wanted to wait for a taxi in a safe place. A young lad separated from his friends and in need of a safe place to sort himself out before going home." (9-12-2005)

“Saturday was also busy with a lot of people on the streets needing help. We watched two girls struggling to hold each other up as they staggered on Commercial Street before they collapsed on George Street. We assisted them before they wandered off into a nightclub. Two minutes later they came back out and went straight into a pub. We informed the police and then came back fifteen minutes later to find one of the girls in an alleyway and the other collapsed in the toilets. We assisted the police and took the girl who didn't need hospital assistance to the cafe where we contacted her sister who came to her rescue.”
(10-12-2005)

For me this is one of the most powerful encounters in my eight years of Street Angels! Four and half years later the young lady we took back to the cafe came up to me in the town centre. She thanked us for helping her that night (she was fourteen when we helped her) and then said that her life had changed because of the help we had given. She realised that her life was worth more than the life she was living – she had stopped going out drinking and had settled down to school work and her family life. From not doing very well at school she went on to do well in her GCSE's, stayed at school for A Levels and was at home for the Easter Holidays from her first year at University. The change had happened because a few people in yellow jackets cared enough to make sure she was cleaned up and given assistance to get to a friend's house. This, for me, shows the worth of what Street Angels do and I know that now it is a story repeated in community after community week after week.

“A slightly older girl was unable to stand at the top end of town and was assisted to the cafe where we got a taxi to take her to Beeston. We also helped a boy who was very drunk and whose mates did not want to go home with him to get home safely.” (10-12-2005)

Another moment that stands out from these first few weeks is the Bucking Bronco Vicar! The Acapulco nightclub had hired a bucking bronco (although it became a reindeer) and invited Street Angels to stand with buckets for donations as people tried the ride. Lesley Cheetham, a curate at the Parish Church, had come to Street Angels in her dog collar – this created a great photo opportunity and Lesley was thrilled to use this in advertisements, posters and leaflets. I think I remember her smiling, or was that a grimace? She can be reassured that her divine dramatics proved to be yet another ice breaker and conversation point to spread the word about the project. I am sure there is a twinkle in the eye of all the patrons who remember watching with glee the one and only (that we know of) bucking vicar!

On Mad Friday, (the Friday before Christmas) many of the volunteers met early for a celebratory meal. We welcomed our first visitors, Rob and Jennifer from York, who had heard of this idea and wanted to see it in action. Jennifer later went on to set up and manage York Street Angels. They encountered our busiest night yet. Between 1.10am and 1.50am we had someone coming into the cafe for help every five minutes! On Christmas Eve we encountered our first homeless man, and despite our best efforts, all we could offer was an endless supply of coffee and toast. New Years Eve was also busy (though quieter than many were expecting) with fancy dress costumes and many needs on the streets, but the police reported a trouble free evening:

"Inspector Mohammed Rauf, of Calderdale police, said it had been a run-of-the-mill New Year's Eve.

"The town centre was full of revellers in the festive spirit and it went pretty well," he said.

"We can give the people of Halifax a pat on the back for enjoying themselves and keeping in the spirit of things." (Halifax Courier, 2-1-2006)

As we got into the New Year 2006 the Street Angels had very much landed in Halifax, we were welcomed by the town, the pubs and clubs, the Police, the media, Town Centre Management, the Local Authority and those who volunteered were excited to see this idea continue and develop.

**Street Angels have
Landed.....**

Street Angels Have Landed!

As we continued into January 2006, the town centre had totally changed. From the hustle and busyness of the pre-Christmas parties, the weather changed and the town became much quieter. Resources from other agencies that had increased over the Christmas period were much reduced and as snow fell and temperatures plummeted, the next few months seemed cold and long!

The quieter months gave us opportunity for training. Some volunteers enjoyed the conflict awareness day a little too much with much crashing to the mats, shouting at other volunteers and enthusiastic tussling! These few months also gave us time to assess and make sense of what we had encountered in our first six weeks. An amazing team of over thirty volunteers committed to Street Angels as a long term project and local media, church and Police championed the role of Street Angels and the impact and success it had. The project was receiving much interest from official bodies such as the Government Office for Yorkshire and Humber, who monitored our progress and impact.

In order to add some professionalism, our jackets were screen-printed! Much more robust than the laminated "Street Angels" sign attached to our jackets with blu-tack, sellotape, velcro and gaffer tape! It did spoil the fun of those out on the town though, as the game of who could collect the most Street Angel badges was finished!

In January, Peggy Walker from BBC Radio Leeds joined us one cold, icy, snowy night and spent a few hours walking the streets with us; the feature was on the Radio Leeds news the following day, as well as an extended piece on the morning show.

A press statement - Street Angels have landed - in January summed up our progress well:

"Street Angels, a pilot project which has assisted dozens of people in its first five weekends, up to Christmas is set to continue in Halifax Town Centre.

Churches Together in Halifax were offered premises in Halifax YMCA, which are used Thursday to Saturday as a Fairtrade Café and Prayer Centre for shoppers and workers in the town. Concern for the nightlife of Halifax, combined with the start of the new Licensing Act, stimulated an idea to use the Café as a safe place over the Christmas period for those visiting the town's clubs and pubs.

This Nightlife project was launched in November with full support and backing of Halifax Town Centre Police, and is beginning to link with other organisations such as Halifax Ambassadors and Calderdale Safer Communities Partnership. One Town Centre club, The Acapulco, was so impressed with the scheme that they promoted it within the club and organised a fundraising Bucking Rudolph!

The volunteers, who are local Christians, are linked by radio with the police. While some remain staffing the base at the Café, others walk the streets in fluorescent yellow jackets bearing the very appropriate name, Street Angels, which was adopted on the first evening. As well as offering help to people who may be vulnerable, the Angels chat with clubbers and those working in the town and also wait with those leaving the Victoria Theatre or Under sixteen Parties until transport arrives.

In its first seven weekends (since end November), over forty people have been helped at the Café. "Some just want a warm and safe place to wait for a taxi or lift home", explains Street Angels coordinator Paul Blakey, "while others need medical help, reuniting with friends or cleaning up after being involved in a fight."

Sergeant Dave Apsee of the Halifax Neighbourhood Policing Team, said of the scheme, "We were excited when Churches Together offered the use of this facility. Police, Community Support Officers and those involved in the Pub Watch scheme will work with those in the café to ensure that young people in particular are safe when in the town centre". These thoughts were echoed by Inspector Vince Firth of Calderdale Police who commented "It will be a refuge for people who become vulnerable, whether they have had too much to drink or whether they have gone out with mates and at some point lost their friends. This centre is for people of all faiths and beliefs."

Lesley Cheetham, curate of Halifax Parish Church, one of the volunteers and a member of Churches Together in Halifax said, "We want Halifax to be a safer place at night. You hear people say that they don't like to go into town because they are afraid of the trouble caused by heavy drinking. As Christians we really care about people (night clubbers too!) and we want to show that'."

As the winter made way for spring; the town was returning to its pre-Christmas self and the clubs, pubs and streets started to attract the multitudes again!

People came to the cafe seeking prayer, including: a man on leave from the Army who asked for prayer after spending five hours sobering up in the cafe; seven different young people who were all facing crisis and all needing someone to talk with; another soldier on leave from Basra who was traumatised by some of the things he had witnessed.

Bradford councillor Carol Beardmore came to visit one night, and she was instrumental in seeing Bradford Street Angels launch in December 2007. On another night we welcomed The Right Honourable Brian Mawhinney KT who had spoken earlier in the evening at the County Towns Dinner organised by Christian organisations for key people in the Borough.

St John Ambulance Joins Patrols:

As Easter approached, working with Andrew Sloman, the Night-Time Coordinator of Calderdale Council, we were joined on the streets and in the cafe by St John Ambulance who would offer first aid care on Friday and Saturday nights. This attracted much regional media publicity and proved life saving on the second weekend of running. A call to one of the town centre nightclubs was responded to within a minute - a disagreement between a boss and employee had caused the employee to push his boss down some stairs with a lot of force (the boss had walked away from the disagreement and was on his way out of the nightclub). The man flew down the flight of stairs into the wall and landed on the bottom step. With serious head wounds and an unconscious state, two young St John Ambulance volunteers respond and managed to resuscitate the man and begin to administer help to his head wound. Four minutes later the Ambulance service arrived and said the man was so seriously injured had the two St John volunteers not done what they did then this would have been a murder scene. Eight weeks later the man came out of his coma a few days before his new granddaughter was born.

St John Ambulance partnered with us on the streets for over two years and made a real difference to the issues that were often transferred from the town centre to Calderdale Accident and Emergency department. During that time, the St John Ambulance team trained several of our Street Angel volunteers in first aid and now first aid is offered by Street Angels. Often a removed pair of high heel shoes can result in glass becoming embedded in a foot, not a reason for a visit to A&E, but with a steady hand, some anti-septic wipes and a plaster along with a pair of flip-flops, the situation can be easily resolved. I like the story from Sanktuary in Telford, whilst removing glass from a young revellers foot the Sanktuary volunteer had a vision of Jesus stood next to him saying, *"When I told you to wash feet I meant it!"* As he finished cleaning the girls foot and applying the plaster and offering the flip-flops, the young lady said *"God bless you for this"* to which the volunteer replied, *"I think he just has!"* As I heard that story, and recounting my own experiences of removing glass and cleaning up feet, it strikes me that Street Angels is just the sort of thing Jesus would do. We meet people in situations and times of need and simply accept them, help them, bless them, speak words of hope and love and pray for them as they go onwards.

Having volunteer medics on the ground in the town centre began to impact the Accident and Emergency department, with Chris Wood the A&E coordinator at Calderdale Royal Hospital commenting in the Halifax Courier on 10th May 2006:

“The scheme is an excellent one. Friday and Saturday nights are notoriously busy. Alcohol has a massive impact on the department at nights, both from patients and from their accompanying friends, and all too often we are spending valuable time dealing with the effects of alcohol instead of the problem they have attended with. The pressure on the staff in accident and emergency is tremendous and we welcome the team approach that this night scheme brings.”

The World Cup saw Street Angels joined on the streets of Halifax town centre by ‘Nightlife Marshals’ and ‘St John Ambulance’ for all the major World Cup games. The Marshals scheme saw trained security staff out and about in the town providing a rapid response to any situations of violence or conflict and is an idea that has been replicated across the UK.

Official Launch:

In June, as part of Volunteers' Week, we decided to officially launch Street Angels and the wider night-time safety initiative as well as publically thanking the amazing team of volunteers who had made our first six months an overwhelming success.

In a reception at the Halifax YMCA, over one hundred people gathered including the Mayor and Mayoress of Calderdale, Deputy Lieutenant, representatives from the Police and Community Support Officers, church leaders, councillors, 'Calderdale College', CCTV, 'Primary Care Trust', regeneration partnerships, local businesses, Calderdale Royal Hospital, other towns interested in starting a Street Angels project, daytime volunteers from the Fairtrade Cafe (now called Angels Rest), St John Ambulance and the Street Angels.

As part of the official launch the Archbishop of York, Rt. Rev. John Sentamu, came out with his support for the scheme, describing Street Angels as a 'great idea', Archbishop John added: *"I congratulate everyone working to make Halifax a safer place at night without taking the fun out of life. Christians - get to it!"*

The evening included presentations of certificates to the volunteers and talks from various dignitaries and partners, including:

"Calderdale is the only police force in West Yorkshire that has seen crime and violent assaults fall this year. This is thanks to the wonderful way that different agencies work together for the good of the town, including Street Angels as well as the wonderful work carried out by the Police and Community Support Officers."
Ian Levitt, the Divisional Commander of Calderdale Police

"Street Angels has made a difference to the town centre during Friday and Saturday nights - thanks to the volunteers who make this happen." Vince Firth, Inspector of the Halifax Neighbourhood Policing

"I want to give the official announcement that I am "chuffed to bits" with the way the different agencies are working together in Halifax for the benefit of society. This is something quite unique to Halifax and as a small fish in a big pond we are giving a big bite!" Andrew Sloman of Calderdale Council's Nightlife Project

The evening ended with various guests joining the Street Angels on patrol including the Mayor and Mayoress of Calderdale, Colin and Ann Stout and Deputy Lieutenant James Barker visiting nightclubs (yes the Mayor and Mayoress wore the Mayoral chains on the dance floor – with the Mayor's Attendant Jenny keeping a very close eye on proceedings) speaking to door-staff, police and revellers.

Our launch was a significant evening of bringing together those who want to be active in seeing change in our town! From the Street Angels point of view, we do this because we believe God cares and wants to make a difference, and the way God will do this is through his people willing to do mad things! In these first few months I stood in meetings and wrote in the local media that when we pray "*God's Kingdom come, God's will be done, on earth as in heaven*" these are not merely words, but action in taking peace, hope, joy, protection, safety and anything that is good to the streets and communities where it is needed. I believed, and declared, that because Street Angels is a Christian project, and because of the increase in Christians praying for the town at night, that crime would reduce and the town would be safer. As Ian Levitt, the Divisional Commander of Calderdale Police, shared at the launch night – crime and violent assaults had fallen! In August 2006 the Police reported a decrease in crime of forty percent during December 2005. This was first month of Street Angels and the Alcohol Misuse Enforcement Campaign run by the Police in partnership with others including pubs and clubs. The monthly PubWatch meetings also highlighted the continued reduction showing in July 2005 there were eighty nine offences and this fell to just fifty in July 2006.

Halifax was leading the way and we had become a showcase for other towns – national media had started to feature our work including 'Inspire Magazine', 'New Life', 'Premier Radio' and the 'West Yorkshire Police newspaper' which was delivered to every house in West Yorkshire. Other towns had made contact and visited and our web site was receiving hundreds of visits a week.

Meanwhile down in Watford...

The Watford Street Angels Story.....

The Watford Street Angels Story

Richard Chewter, Watford Town Centre Chaplain, writes:

"Hello, I just wanted to say a big thank you to all of you who helped me last night, especially the lady I remember spending a lot of time looking after me. I think what you do is wonderful. If only there were more nice people like you guys around! I must say I found the glove in my hair very funny this morning! Hope to hear back from you thanks again!" E

Watford Chaplaincy started the Street Angel ministry on 15th July 2006 in response to the needs of our night time economy. For years the concern at Police, Council and local level was about the degeneration of the behaviour and accompanying state of the town as a result of the clubbing culture in Watford.

For a long time newspaper and police reports described a night time economy out of control. Similar to many other towns really. Watford Town Centre Chaplaincy was started in 2003 and in November 2004 Richard Chewter started in the post of Watford's first Town Centre Chaplain.

"I remember clearly being told not to go up the town at night because it was a dangerous place to be, fights and drunken behaviour was all I heard about. Well I had to see for myself, so one Saturday night I went for a look. Yes it was loud and there were the inevitable fights and drunken goings-on. But to be honest I can remember being the same as a young man, and anyhow it wasn't that bad really."

However the town felt it was getting out of control, so we considered prayerfully what the Chaplaincy response should be. The team looked at other Christian and none Christian responses there were to this night time problem.

Nothing seemed to fit the needs of Watford or was not flexible enough to change, as the town changed. We really wanted to respond to the need, but how, was our biggest question.

We then looked at creating something just for Watford to answer our town's needs. We tried out several types of response from being pastors to being counsellors. However when we tried Street Angels this seemed to resonate with people and we received immediate acceptance. Thus the idea for Watford Street Angels came about.

On the 26th April 2005 the original proposal was put to chaplaincy trustees and after careful consideration and advice from the Police, Mayor Dorothy Thornhill and local business man, Michael Stevens; we felt we had a ministry ready to start.

We began to recruit and train volunteers. God was really great to us and brought along an initial team that needed little training because they all had great previous experience of youth and street work.

So clad out in Street Angel uniform, we went out for our first night to be greeted by people who were only too happy to talk and spend time with us.

Some volunteers share their thoughts on life as a Street Angel:

"The aim of Street Angels is to care for people on the Streets. We can be a listening ear to people. The individual who just wants to chat to somebody." K

"People bus into Watford from as far away as Essex for a night out. On busy nights we can have ten thousand people on the streets. Alcohol is the main problem. People come for a night out and get 'tanked up', then need help. We try to offer Pastoral support to people. We have nothing to sell, it's not about selling Jesus to people, but about being there and listening to them" A

"It's about being Jesus to everyone we meet." R

About six months later we learned about the Halifax Street Angels having started. We had heard nothing of this up till then and have been really amazed at how two projects unrelated to one another came up with the same solution to the needs of their local community. We have been really blessed that Halifax has taken on a national role, something we never wanted, but have been happy to help in launching Street Angels in other towns and cities in the South of England.

Now in 2013 we have teams out every Friday and Saturday night, and once a month we run a complementary ministry 'GAD' (God after Dark) which provide a safe place for Street Angels and others, to bring people who need looking after, who need to be reunited with their friends or find a way home.

Some of the Watford Street Angels partner organisations offer endorsements:

“The Street Angels have already had a positive impact on the atmosphere in the town at weekends. They complement the important work of the police and emergency services.” Yasmin Batliwala – former chair of Watford Community Safety Partnership.

“As the local neighbourhood Inspector for Watford I have found the Chaplaincy to be an invaluable asset to our work. Internally we have the chaplaincy structure which provides support for our staff and externally we have a number of areas in which they assist us. The Street Angels have been part of our Night Time Economy Structure for several years now and are invaluable in dealing with those who need assistance, but whom we do not have the time to deal with. Officers will regularly ask for support from the Angels which then allows them to carry on with the police tasks required in the town at that time. The setting up of ‘GAD’ was very welcome and was commented on very favourably by the Purple Flag Award Assessors who visited the town to assess us for the flag. The team pulled out all the stops that night and provided some great supporting evidence for our accreditation.

I meet with Richard on a regular basis and we share information on town issues particularly around the vulnerable members of the community. We have discussed our current plans around Domestic Violence and how the Chaplaincy can assist with that. An example of a general supportive role it plays is in relation to a recent spate of thefts of handbags from the elderly within the town centre. The Chaplaincy are putting up our posters across the town churches as Richard suggested that the elderly ladies may pay more attention to the posters there than in general shops, which has enabled us to reach a wider audience. I have met with Karen, the worker on the new project and will be linking in with her as part of my work on the ‘Ugly Mugs project’ I am involved in with the street workers.

I am very grateful for their support and believe the Chaplaincy is indeed an asset to the town.” Inspector Deirdre M Dent – Watford Safer Neighbourhood Team.

“We all need someone to turn to at times, someone who will listen to our problems and not judge us. Often we choose to confide in a family member or a friend, but there are times when we can’t wait or we specifically want an outsider’s ear. On these occasions the Watford Town Centre Chaplains are quite literally a Godsend!

I am full of admiration for the work they do, their latest focus on women involved in the sex trade is worthwhile and in my opinion vital. Likewise, the God After Dark programme. I've had the pleasure of joining the Street Angels on several occasions and have seen first-hand how they keep the calm in the town centre at night, and help individuals who have run into trouble.

The Watford Town Centre Chaplaincy has the trust of the town, all the members of the local strategic partnership, 'One Watford', are aware and very supportive of the work they do." Dorothy Thornhill, Elected Mayor Watford.

Like elsewhere the Watford Street Angels team have collected stories over the years that show the amazing impact a helping hand can make in a person's life.

Here are a few that have made an impression:

The Glove:

"We saw the ambulance off – it had been a tiring experience. The girl, called S, had been vomiting rings around herself when we found her in the High Street. Rapidly she slipped into an alcoholic stupor and an ambulance was summoned. The whole episode had taken quite some time and we all needed to go back for our break. It was freezing cold we needed a cup of tea. As we walked further down the street toward our rendezvous, I noticed that I was missing a glove. Street Angels dress with thought and care for protection and warmth. My gloves were thermal and used only for Street Angels. I was annoyed with my own carelessness, but remembered taking them off to stroke S's forehead. My team leader went back to look for the glove, to the bench where we had dealt with S, despite my protests. The glove was not there. We decided that we really did need to go for a cup of tea. However, quite a distance from the spot, my team leader decided to make a stop solely to pray for my glove. I regret to say that my thoughts were more on the cuppa than the glove! However when I looked down on the road at my feet there the glove lay! It had not been there when we stopped to pray.

Some might say, 'but this story is only about a glove'. My response is absolutely not! This is an example of how our loving Father takes care of the little things that concern us, as well as the larger issues."

Calling Out to the Crowds:

“Since becoming a Street Angel in Watford I have had so many memorable experiences of God’s intervention in the lives of those we meet. I will attempt to relate a few of them, but they really are a drop in the ocean of God’s endless love for us all.

It was 2am one Sunday morning in mid-winter. We were thinking of calling it a day, it had been a busy night and all the clubs, but one had closed and the clubbers were on their way home. The night club called Oceana was the last to close at 3am. As we walked up the side of the club we noticed a girl scantily dressed lying on the pavement. She was dis-orientated and confused. She was very sick. We cleaned her up and perched her on crowded wall. She said she had left her coat and phone in the club. She had been ejected from the club because she had been sick. She claimed to have had only part of her first drink; we assumed it had been spiked. She was barely coherent. Her name was H. Her friends were inside the club, among several thousand others! She was cold and frightened.

The club was emptying and the young people thronged outside of the doors. My colleagues prayed for her friends to appear from among the crowds. Time went by and it was now 3.45am. We were very concerned as H’s condition did not improve. Prayers continued as I hugged her sitting on the wall to keep her warm. Suddenly after such a long time, I decided to call out to the dwindling crowds ‘is anyone here looking for a friend called H?’ It was either born of desperation or of the Holy Spirit, I did not plan it. Suddenly out of the crowd someone said ‘yes we are’. Her friends came out of the throng with anxious faces. They had been looking for ages for her and had passed us by several times among the swarm of young people.

The Street Angels recognised Gods’ intervention immediately and gave thanks to Him.”

Fight the Good Fight:

“Street Angels witness almost every time they are out; would be fist fights just dissipate before their eyes. We spot the scenario, two young people shouting abuse at each other and generally totally inebriated. They are now in each other’s faces threatening all kinds of violence. The Street Angels pray from a short distance away and in a nanosecond, the two aggressors peel away from each other and walk in opposite directions.

From a Street Angel’s perspective it would be easy to take this for granted, because it is such a common occurrence. However we should remember each time that it is God who is answering prayer instantaneously!”

S recalls: “One night one of my team was talking to a man. God prompted me to go over and help in the conversation. I went over and started asking questions directed by the Holy Spirit. Basically he was carrying a lot of emotional baggage with him and drinking to forget his problems. The problem was his Uncle had recently died and he was hurting a lot. His mum is a Christian and was praying for him constantly. I told him he had to let go of his Uncle and the pain it was bringing him. He then started to get upset until I asked him if he loved his Uncle, he said yes. I asked him if his Uncle had loved him, he said yes so I said why would someone whom you loved and who loved you want you to be drinking to excess to forget the pain and carrying all that baggage. He agreed, so I asked him if I could pray for him. He reluctantly said yes, so I started praying there and then binding up the pain and breaking the chains and asking God to set him free. Instantly he straightened up, sobered up and started smiling. You could visibly see the emotional baggage had gone, and he was happy again. He said the pain has gone; it no longer hurts and feels lighter. He walked away two foot taller and sober. Praise God!

Other times, too numerous to mention, when we pray for the crowd to disperse, we see instantly crowds of over a hundred clubbers just start walking away.

Another night when I was standing outside ‘Chicago Rock Cafe’ with a few police officers, we were talking about the clubbers as they came out of the club and started getting rowdy. A policeman said I wish they would just go home, so I said I would pray. The instant I prayed, the clouds opened up and the rain came down; the policeman looked at me and said “respect”!

Another night we spotted a young female in distress as a doorman shouting at her to go away. We went up to her and asked if we could help her. We walked her home and the next day the Chaplaincy received an email saying something like in all the negative words she was hearing, she heard the soft words "can we help you." She looked up and saw the cross on our jackets.

Last one for now, we had a young man in trouble with the Kebab shop. He had been fighting and the workers had squeezed chilli in his eyes. He came outside and we got him to a bench and started to clean him up. He said in an email later, all he could see whilst we were helping him was the cross on our jackets (his mum had been praying for him for years). God works in all ways.

There are many more stories and more to come in the years ahead. Here in Watford we have been blessed by a God picked team. God has blessed and guided. We wait to see what adventures He has ahead for us."

One Year and Beyond.....

One Year and Beyond

Halifax Street Angels continued to work on the streets and to grow in influence. Several other towns visited the project and saw for themselves the impact volunteers were making within the night-time economy. I visited and spoke to people in Huddersfield, a neighbouring town, and in November 2006 two Halifax Street Angels, Damian Andrews and John Grant, joined Andrew Sloman, Calderdale Council's Nightlife Coordinator, and Chief Inspector Vince Firth, for an evening to meet with church leaders, night-time businesses and Kirklees council. Huddersfield Street Angels launched a few weeks later.

Wakefield Street Angels, who visited Halifax for our Official Launch night, launched on 1st December 2006 with Right Reverend Tony Robinson, the Bishop of Pontefract, joining the first night of patrols. The 'Nexus Project' in Manchester had seen our web site and some of the publicity and so launched Street Angels in Manchester city centre mid-December 2006. The team handed out lollipops and directed people to taxis and bus stops. Reverend Cris Archer from 'The Nexus Project' said:

"The Street Angels have been established to work with the Police to keep people safe, especially at the end of the night when they are most vulnerable. The volunteers are from a range of backgrounds and ages, but all have one thing in common: a willingness to give something back to the community."

The group also ran a 'safe place night time cafe' which offered free tea and coffee.

Other towns that had met or talked with us included Grimsby, Harrogate, Leicester, Newbury, Nottingham, Rochdale and Worthing. We also welcomed various visitors from overseas including: a group of Australian Police Officers linked to 'Rotary International'; Dario Luiz and team from the Brazilian organisation 'Firesowers'; John Bunjo and Deo Musoke church leaders in Uganda; Gaspare, Emiliana and Simona Fiorenzo from Castellammare di Stabia, Italy; and Jim Epley from Florida.

The 'Harrogate Town Pastors' visited Halifax as they were in the planning stages. A few months later Jean and myself joined them for a night in Harrogate. As the team of 'Town Pastors' turned a corner and walked up some stairs we saw a group of men. One of the turned and said to another one of the men, *"I'm terribly sorry, but I am going to have to punch you"* - whack! The most polite drunken people ever encountered!

Our first birthday celebrated over one thousand people receiving direct help from over one hundred volunteers who had invested around eight thousand volunteer hours into the town centre on Friday and Saturday nights. We celebrated in style! Linda Riordan, the MP for Halifax, attended the party and joined us on patrol. The evening was captured on film by 'BBC Look North' and was featured on the Saturday's news bulletins. The police announced on the evening that over the twelve months violent crime had fallen in Halifax town centre by 42% and the 'Community Foundation for Calderdale' had made Street Angels its 'Charity of the Year 2007'. The money that we received from the Charity of the Year meant that we could look at needs within other parts of the Calderdale borough and also, thanks to a donation from 'Halifax Bank of Scotland', employ Paul Blakey, as a full time Project Manager for the scheme.

Our Christmas patrols would mean, according to the local newspaper, that Halifax would be one of the safest towns in the UK. Street Angels joined 'St John Ambulance', 'Nightlife Marshals' and Police in providing a coordinated response to needs within the town centre. The Halifax Courier said of us in its comment:

"There was a need for a common-sense approach to problems in the town centre ... They have become a welcome sight in the town – not just for helping those in trouble but being a symbol of security..."

Crime Reduced:

February 2007 saw the Police figures quoted at our first year celebration officially released, and the Halifax Courier reported on 13th February:

Booze-fuelled violence in Halifax town centre has almost halved over the last year.

The dramatic drop is the biggest reduction in the whole of West Yorkshire and it follows a drive by police and partner agencies to make the area a safer place for a night out.

"People are much more likely to come to the theatre or go for a meal now than they were eighteen months ago," said Inspector Vince Firth.

He said reports of violent crime had fallen by 42% over the last twelve months.

"I am delighted the work is starting to make a difference," he said.

"People talk about figures and statistics but, behind those statistics, there is a victim. We now have less people being subjected to violent offences and that in turn reduces the fear of crime."

He said the fall in crime had been brought about by a number of different schemes, which has seen the police, fire service, Calderdale Council, health-and-safety officials, voluntary organisations and licensees working together.

"A lot of violent crime is alcohol-related, so we have concentrated our approach around the licensing trade," said Inspector Firth.

"Initially we were met with a lot of resistance from the licensing trade, but that has completely changed now.

"As a result, we have a fantastic partnership and they are not serving people who are already drunk.

"Now, there are nowhere near as many drunken people wandering around the town centre."

He said venues had been subject to spot checks by various organisations and children had been used as undercover test purchasers at several off-licences throughout the area.

There has also been a lot of work with voluntary organisations like the Street Angels, night marshals, the town-centre ambassadors, St John Ambulance and special constables.

"On the enforcement side we have a no-nonsense approach to dealing with disorder. If people want to come here and commit disorder they are going to get arrested by police."

The long standing issues of Halifax and its "Wild West of West Yorkshire" image was changing. Street Angels had played a massive part in seeing God's Kingdom of peace and safer communities evident at a time of day when it was most needed. The effectiveness of volunteers, often simply being nice to people, and partnership working was proved by the fact the town had changed 'from binge to better'. The reduction in violent crime bucked national trends which showed a big increase in town centre crime since the introduction of twenty-four hour licensing laws in November 2005. Home Office statistics for Calderdale show there were 35 incidents of violent crime in 2006/07 compared to 47 in 2005/06 with Street Angels helping resolve incidents before they escalated.

Our links with the 'Community Foundation for Calderdale' were strengthened as the staff team donned yellow jackets and joined us for a night on the town! We also began to become more involved in the wider life of the town and borough and became involved with initiatives like 'Halifax in Bloom' and events in the Halifax Piece Hall and the 'Halifax Gala'. It was because we had a fantastic and trained team of volunteers we would often be called on to offer stewarding at events and to help with the tidy up of the town in preparation for 'In Bloom' judging. Day time activities helped us to reach a wider audience and to widen our impact.

At one of these daytime events a lady approached us and told us the story of her grandson. He had apparently sat down on the steps of the doorway to 'Harveys Department Store' in the town centre (Roger Harvey and this store are great supporters of the work we do locally and nationally and have being part of our story in a wide variety of ways). Her grandson had fallen into a deep sleep and suddenly felt this shaking on his shoulder. He half opened his eyes, as you do when woken from a deep sleep, and saw three glowing figures stood in front of

him. She told us that because they were stood underneath the street light they also looked to have haloes! One of the Street Angels leant towards this boy and said, *“Excuse me son, are you ok, can we take you to a better place?”* He woke and sobered up quite quickly! That question of *“can we take you to a better place?”* has become our heart of the work of Street Angels, as we seek to take our communities and individuals to a better place!

In August 2007 Street Angels welcomed the Chief Constable of West Yorkshire, Sir Norman Bettison, to the cafe and streets to experience firsthand the impact of Street Angels, St John Ambulance and Nightlife Marshals. Invited by Damian Andrews, one of our volunteers, via a phone-in on BBC Radio Leeds, Sir Norman was followed round town by a camera crew from Yorkshire Television. Sir Norman said the dramatic turnaround was a *“great success story”* and that *“Halifax looked like a great place for a night out!”* During his patrol round town Sir Norman came across two ‘McFly’ fans sleeping out, to ensure that they were at the front of the queue (in fact they were the queue) when tickets went on sale the following morning. Kelly and Sammy were escorted back to the cafe by Sir Norman where they spent the night with the Street Angels before returning to the theatre at 5am. We also welcomed visitors from Bradford who were planning the launch of Bradford Street Angels for December.

Royal and Political Recognition:

Royal recognition from His Royal Highness Prince Andrew was received in October as we won the 'Duke of York's Community Initiative'. Anna Zepeda, Julie Waddington, Jean and Paul Blakey attended the Awards Ceremony at Conisbrough, near Doncaster, and had the honour of chatting with Prince Andrew about our work, following the formal presentation of the Award. The award recognises the development of community spirit, individual leadership and initiatives in Yorkshire and Humber.

Ahead of our second birthday we hosted a visit from MP Nick Clegg as part of his campaign to become leader of the Liberal Democrats. Mr Clegg later went on to become Deputy Prime Minister and the Halifax Courier reported (5-11-2007):

Mr Clegg said it was "fantastic" to hear about the positive impact of the ambassadors and described the 42 per cent reduction in town centre crime since the Street Angels started two years ago as "extraordinary".

"It is so impressive. There is a wonderful mixture of different people, some working on a volunteer basis, all playing their distinct roles to make Halifax a safer place."

He said he had not encountered such an effective co-operative across the UK.

By the end of 2007 there were thirteen projects modelled on Street Angels running including locally in Hebden Bridge and Todmorden and nationally new schemes launched in Bradford, Leeds, Wetherby and Lerwick on the Shetland Isles. The idea had well and truly proved itself and most of the other towns running Street Angels were reporting reductions in violent crime and anti-social behaviour.

More recognition came in spring 2008 as we received the 'Yorkshire and Humber Regional Tilley Award' alongside the 'Halifax Town Centre Ambassadors'. These Home Office led awards are named after Nick Tilley, a professor of Criminology at Nottingham Trent University. Mr Tilley has contributed towards developing a more strategic approach to crime reduction in the UK and commented of the day time Ambassador patrols and night time Street Angels that:

"invaluable work seems to have been done by a range of individuals and agencies and this is highly commendable."

Paul Blakey and Beth Ward (Halifax Town Centre Manager) attended the 'Tilley Home Office Problem Orientated Partnership' conference to present a workshop around the work carried out in Halifax town centre in both the day and night time economy. Street Angels also became the fourth organisation in the borough to be awarded an 'Investing in Volunteers Award' which recognised both the hard work carried out by the volunteers and the oversight and management of the team.

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The main focus always remained our work on the streets. We made some great friends including 'The Twins', Adey and Sue. Adey and Sue are friends but were always dressed identically for a Saturday night out in Halifax. They once gave us a donation with the words:

"Thanks for all the brilliant work you do in keeping Halifax a safe place and for looking after us" Adey, Twin Number One

"Thank you for looking after us and keeping us safe. You do a brilliant job." Sue, Twin Number Two.

Another night a large group of young people walked past the cafe and we overheard the question from one of the group, *"Street Angels, who are they?"* to which one of the other young people replied, *"Street Angels, they are like the mafia of Halifax!"*

Over the years we have also met and received thanks from a large number of celebrities, generally when they are appearing at the Victoria Theatre. These include: Peter Alexandra, Julie Buckfield, Jimmy Cricket, Ken Dodd, Paul Opaic, Neil Hurst, Kate Rusby, Abi Titmuss, Tim Vine, Lesley Waters, Kevin Woodford, six High Sheriff's of West Yorkshire (the High Sherriff changes annually and every High Sherriff to date has visited and patrolled as a Street Angel) and even an Olympic Torch!

Our work also featured in the book, "21st Century Miracles of Social Transformation" by Debra Green, founder of Redeeming Our Communities. Street Angels was highlighted as an example of best practice in the 'Praying and Policing in Partnership' chapter.

The Halifax steering group were amazed at the way God had taken this idea, resulting from the question “what are the needs in the town and what can the church do to meet those needs?”, and planted it in local areas across the UK. Paul and Jean believed there was a need for a national network to be in place to support and resource new villages, towns and cities wanting to start a Street Angels project as well as a place to celebrate the local stories and provide national information centrally. We were beginning to discover existing projects such as ‘NightLight’ serving tea and coffee to clubbers in Belfast city centre. This project was launched in 1995 and Jean, who is from Northern Ireland, though had not heard of NightLight, is slightly chuffed that Northern Ireland was the first! You can read the NightLight story later on in the book). ‘Dundee Street Chaplains’ launched in 2000 and ‘Church for the Night in Bournemouth’ launched in 2001. As a title ‘Street Angels Network’ didn’t seem right as we wanted to celebrate all that was happening within the night-time economy and so ‘Christian Nightlife Initiatives Network’ (or ‘CNI Network’ for short) was launched at a conference at ‘The King’s Centre’ Halifax in July 2008...

In 2022 CNI Network had served its purpose and Street Angels became part of ROC (Redeeming Our Communities) a charity started a year before Street Angels aiming to link Police, church, community, local authorities together for the benefit of the wider community.

“The witness of Christians through work in night-time projects brings Jesus’ own ministry of welcome to our streets and I am immensely grateful for the difference you make to the lives of vulnerable people. My prayers are with you, that you and all who serve in this way may be strengthened through faith and may bring God’s love to those you meet.” - Archbishop of Canterbury Most Reverend Justin Welby

To the Nations.....

To the Nations

A prophetic vision was shared with the church in Halifax in June 2000 by an American minister, Rick Gillis. It said:

“For I am causing this place to become a habitation of the glory of God and out of this place there will flow a stream, like a raging river, says God. It will touch the cities of England. Its fame will be known afar and they will come to this place, to be touched by that power, to be transformed by that power and to see the manifestation of the glory of God... The glory of the Lord shall arise from this place and it will be seen from afar, says God.”

Street Angels is one of the out-workings of this as a Halifax inspired initiative touching cities across England (and now beyond) and its fame known afar because of the work and impact. As I write this in July 2013 we have just launched our first Street Angels in Europe, on the Spanish island of Majorca (we also inspired ‘Street Chaplains’ in Townsville, Australia and have links with ‘The Living Room’ in Tenerife) and on the back of the Majorca launch the story of Halifax Street Angels and the CNI Network has featured extensively in Spanish and UK media. CNI Network is yet another amazing story...

The first Street Angels – Christian Nightlife Initiatives conference attracted over fifty people from across the country. The day was opened by the Bishop of Pontefract Right Reverend Tony Robinson. Bishop Tony is a keen supporter of Street Angels and later became our first patron. He has gone out on the streets with Halifax, Huddersfield and Wakefield Street Angels and, on one occasion in Halifax when introduced to Yasmine, the burger lady at the bottom of George Street, was asked by her to bless the burger van! So at just after 1am Bishop Tony said a prayer of blessing over Yasmine and the van which prompted the response, *“I’ve never met or been blessed by a Bishop before!”* Speakers throughout the day included Malcolm Duncan of ‘Faithworks’ and Debra Green founder of ‘Redeeming our Communities’ alongside local Police, Local Authority and Town Centre Management. People running local projects were given opportunity to share about what was happening and some of the plans for new project launches. Others came to be inspired to see if Street Angels would work within their local area. By the end of 2008 we knew of thirty one night-time initiatives running across the UK many of them launched as a result of the nationwide ‘HOPE 08’ campaign.

In Halifax, the project had very much become part of the night-time scene in the town and we continued to welcome a steady flow of visitors from villages, towns and cities from across the UK who were looking at launching similar projects. The concept and good news of reduced crime in Halifax town centre continued to receive national publicity with features on in the 'Salvation Army magazine', 'Church Times' and various radio stations. We trialled nights in neighbouring smaller towns including Brighouse, helped with road safety and stay safe campaigns. On our third birthday, we saw around fifty guests and volunteers enjoying a carvery and entertainment at a local restaurant.

Nationally Jean, Paul and volunteers from Halifax were in demand to go and share experiences of working the streets and the vision and workings of CNI Network was developed. In October 2008 Guildford Street Angels launched with a commissioning service led by the Bishop of Guildford Right Reverend Christopher Hill and Police Inspector Julie Murray and attended by the fifty volunteers and local dignitaries. The Guildford scheme has had great success and impact with public place violent crime reducing by 29% on the nights the team are out and has become a catalyst for launching similar schemes within the Guildford area and made links with existing projects such as the 'Aldershot Town Centre Pastoral Team' who launched in 2004.

'Bolton Night Cafe' (which later developed into Street Angels) won the support of comedian and 'Phoenix Nights' star Dave Spikey who said, *"Everyone likes to go out and have a good time, but it's no joke when you have too much to drink or get separated from your mates. It's a great idea and I hope everyone supports it."* 'Bristol Nights' parked up a double-deck bus and served refreshments and 'Rugby Refresh' included a successful knives amnesty bin alongside tea and coffee. CNI Network was establishing itself as a place and web site where stories like these could be shared and the resources offered to help starting a new Street Angels project easier.

Throughout 2009 projects carried on launching across the UK and better links made to existing night-time projects. In October the Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, was introduced to Street Angels in Wakefield and later said on a BBC Politics Show interview, *"I have just met some of the Street Angels working in the region, they do a tremendous job."*

MBE:

In late November 2009 a letter arrived for Paul from the Cabinet Office with the opening line:

“The Prime Minister has asked me to inform you, in strict confidence, that having accepted the advice of the Cabinet Secretary and Main Honours Committee, he proposes to submit your name to the Queen. The recommendation is that Her Majesty may be graciously pleased to approve that you be appointed a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) in the New Year 2010 Honours List.”

Shocked was not the word! I slipped it into conversation later in the day when my wife Jean asked me about my day (“done some of the newsletter, sent a few emails and received a MBE...”) but besides Jean I told no-one. Only when the local newspaper rang me on the day before New Year’s Eve did it really sink in that yes I was to receive a MBE! The honour was for ‘Contribution to Community Safety in the Borough of Calderdale’ but in reality was not just for me, but for every single volunteer across the country who invests time into local communities on weekend evenings.

The official invitation came and so on Wednesday 10th March 2010, I had a date at Buckingham Palace! Along with Jean, my Mum Lynda and friend Marcia, we set off for London. The day is one I will always remember and was a morning of meeting other award winners, admiring amazing works of art and having the opportunity to share the story of Street Angels across the country with Her Majesty the Queen. As my name was called, the rehearsed meeting was a reality, and I bowed, walked forward and received my honour. Her Majesty then asked me about Street Angels and I finished by inviting her to join us one Friday or Saturday night in a yellow jacket! The Queen laughed at this and said that [Street Angels] *“sounds fascinating and much needed.”* With a shake of the hand, my moment with Her Majesty was over and I went to join the other Award Winners watching in the Palace Ballroom. After photographs in the Palace courtyard, we made our way through Hyde Park for lunch and to reflect on the day.

The work of the national CNI Network continued and in April 2010 we separated from ‘Christians Together in Calderdale’ (the charity whose umbrella we were under) and formed Street Angels – Christian Nightlife Initiatives as a charity. Run by volunteers and supporters from Halifax Street Angels, by mid 2011, because of the continued growth, a national board of trustees was sought and in April 2012 took on the running of the charity. Paul had split his time half and half between

Halifax Street Angels and national development over this two years, working alongside Adam May from Bedford Street Angels, until June 2012 when Paul moved to CNI Network full time. These two years saw some rapid expansion in terms of our partnerships with other organisations, our national influence and links with influential groups and people. Adam and Paul visited many organisations, MP's, national Police and church leaders sharing with them the stories from local projects and the impact that the church was making within the night-time economy.

Stories such as: In Great Yarmouth, 'Refresh' prevented arrests on New Year's Eve 2009; a joint Police, NHS, Probation Service and Street Angels scheme 'Stay Safe' campaign leading to a 71% cut in the number of sex offences in West Yorkshire; Wetherby Street Angels (who launched in June 2007) meet young people in the town. The team are usually met by young people chanting "Street Angels!" and one young man always tells people "*The Street Angels saved my life!*"

Our second national conference in July 2010 in Bedford saw fifty volunteers from across the UK meet together to network and hear speakers including Steve Clifford, Director of the 'Evangelical Alliance', Andy Turner from the 'Church Urban Fund' and the Bishop of Bedford, Right Reverend Richard Inwood.

Following the conference, Steve Clifford wrote in the Church Times (23rd June 2010):

"A couple of weeks ago, at the Christian Nightlife Initiatives conference, I met some people who are doing exactly what David Cameron called for at his Big Society launch. Without relying on Government orders or funding, the Street Angels are passionately working to see their communities transformed. They – and other similar initiatives such as Street Pastors – spend their evenings on high streets up and down the country picking up the pieces and helping people home after a messy night out..."

As we celebrated five years in November 2010, around seventy similar projects were running across the UK with interest and visits from Africa, America, Australia, Brazil and Hungary. Much of 2010 was spent visiting towns to speak to groups looking to start or, with Adam, strengthening the partnerships and our national influence. National media continued to feature our work with a radio interview by Steve Chalke MBE on Premier Radio and mentions in Church of England Newspaper and Evangelical Alliance Idea magazine. On our fifth

birthday Calderdale's Police Divisional Commander, Chief Superintendent Alan Ford, said:

"We welcome the fantastic work the Street Angels do. By having them working alongside us in dealing with vulnerable people, including young people, who have become detached from their friends, had a little too much to drink, etc, means my officers are free to tackle other incidents that require police officers."

With the Halifax Courier adding (October 18th 2010):

"Our streets are better and safer for them. They began their work at a time when cheap alcohol and binge drinking were taking their toll. The number of rapes, particularly on young girls who had had too much to drink, was disgracefully high. It makes all the difference to know that there is now an organised group of people on hand to help those in difficulty. If it was your own son or daughter in distress – even if it was self-inflicted – you would be extremely grateful for their help ... No wonder the idea is being copied around the country ... We hope you stay around a lot longer to help many other people."

Sentiments echoed by Police, Local Authorities, MP's, media, volunteers and those we help across the UK (you can read more local stories later in the book!) Halifax's fifth birthday was also marked by Halifax becoming the first small town in the UK to be awarded the 'Purple Flag Award'. Purple Flag is given to towns to recognise great entertainment and hospitality within the night-time economy. The award comes after several assessments of the town from teams of judges who visited and marked within five categories. It is great that many other towns where our local projects run have since entered the 'Purple Flag Awards' and the work of volunteer teams are seen as adding value and positive impact resulting in safer and more vibrant night-time centres.

Love Your Streets:

Valentines Weekend 2011 saw the launch of 'Love Your Streets' at an event in Beeston, Nottingham, which also launched Beeston Street Angels. Working with 'HOPE Together' we wanted to take the concept of Street Angels and expand on it to encourage everyone to do things for others. The 'Love Your Streets' web site and social media was developed and we launched with features on local BBC radio across the country. From simple ideas to the more organised, many took up the Love Your Streets challenge including several local projects handing our Love Heart sweets on Valentine's Day. Over Lent in 2012 we launched the #Do1NiceThing campaign encouraging people to do one nice thing each and every day. Love Your Streets has also become part of the legacy of 'National Day of Prayer' held at Wembley Stadium in September 2012. Working with 'Neighbourhood Prayer Network' we are aiming to see 'Love Your Streets' happening on every street in the UK and in 2013 launched 'Love Your Street London' working with Kingsborough Family Church in Uxbridge.

Rebekah Brettle, CEO of Neighbourhood Prayer Network, writes:

"'Neighbourhood Prayer Network', officially launched at the 'National Day of Prayer' held on 29th September 2012. The aim of Neighbourhood Prayer Network is to see, in partnership with other organisations like 'Love Your Streets,' every street covered in Christian Prayer, with Christians praying for, caring for and as opportunities arise, sharing faith with neighbours. No-one organisation or denomination can hope to achieve this vision alone. Working together with many others, it becomes not only possible, but a reality.

I have recently left the medical profession, working as a GP, to concentrate on 'Neighbourhood Prayer Network'. As a GP, I had the enormous privilege of observing people's lives; people from all backgrounds, all occupations and all faiths. It was genuinely heartbreaking to visit elderly people who are housebound, (no longer able to leave the house due to illness or disability), and to know that, in some cases, I might be the only visitor they may get that month! There is an epidemic of loneliness and quiet desperation among all age groups across this nation. Our nation is one that is now desperate for the healing power and love of Jesus Christ.

In years gone by, we knew our neighbours, and in many streets across the UK, that is still true. However, for the vast majority of people, few of us know our neighbours well, if we even know their names! It is staggering to realise that we

live in an age when we communicate via SKYPE, Facebook or Twitter halfway across the Earth; yet many of us, with our busy lives, have not found the time to get to know and care for those living on our own street!

We are proud to be in partnership with 'Love Your Streets' and any similar initiative with the same objectives. Together we can make a huge difference!"

neighbourhoodprayer.net

loveyourstreets.org.uk

The Big Society:

As CNI Network, we wanted to equip local projects and the wider church in various ways. The Big Society Debate led by Steve Chalke MBE challenged projects and churches from across the North of England to get ready for the changes planned within local government. The Alternative Vote Referendum evening invited people to discuss the merits of an alternative voting system and was hosted by Dave Gilpin, the Pastor of Hope City Church in Sheffield.

July 2011 saw the third National event for those within CNI Network, partner organisations and friends with a reception at the Houses of Parliament hosted by Stephen Timms MP. The afternoon saw over one hundred people from across the UK attend the event and enjoy a drinks reception, followed by presentations from various local projects. The afternoon was a great time of networking and helped many local projects see that they were part of an amazing UK wide movement of people, who were making the difference for local communities and individuals. The Prime Minister, David Cameron, sent a greeting to the reception which said:

"It is clear that Street Angels and other projects linked by your network are doing good work in supporting those who are victims of night-time crime, drugs and alcohol misuse and sexual exploitation. I want to see a society where faith communities and other local groups come together to protect the most vulnerable."

The Prime Minister showed his support again for the work of Street Angels - CNI Network when, in March 2012, we were announced as a winner of the 'Big Society Award'. Steve and Hazel Brock from 'Stockton Town Pastors' and a trustee of CNI Network along with Paul and Jean attended a reception at Number 10 Downing Street. The day before the Awards ceremony a group of Street Angels were interviewed on a, specially set up, 5pm patrol in Halifax town centre for 'BBC Look North' and radio interviews were carried out for regional and national radio. The day of the Awards started with workshops which gave us opportunity to meet other 'Big Society Award' Winners for the first quarter of 2012, as well as hear from inspirational speakers and take part in a workshop equipping us to make the best use of the Award. We then made our way to Number 10, firstly for an interview outside with ITN, before going inside for a reception. As Mr Cameron was due to meet the Award winners we all separated into groups and he spent several minutes with us chatting about the project, hearing from us the difference it has made in communities across the UK and beyond, and sharing his own experiences of Street Pastors in his constituency. Mr Cameron then

addressed all the Award winners and guests together and on his way out Jean shook him again by the hand and said, “*Nick Clegg has visited us so we challenge you*” to which Mr Cameron replied, “*to a night out in a yellow jacket walking the streets of Halifax – maybe!*”

Commenting on the Big Society Award, David Cameron said:

“Street Angels shows what can be achieved when communities work hand in hand with their local services to make their towns, estates and streets safer places. Paul and his army of volunteers embody the principals of Big Society, with people standing up and taking an active role in building the type of community they want to live in – one that looks out for the vulnerable and says no to the drunken, loutish, criminal behaviour that can too often blight communities. I’m delighted this approach has been used to tackle the very same issues in other towns and cities, as far away as Australia.”

After the visit, Steve Brock said:

“The Church has been doing big society work—taking the initiative to reach out and help others—for more than 2,000 years, and CNI projects up and down the country are just examples of how we are helping those in need without judgement and regardless of circumstance. It was a privilege to attend Downing Street and have our work acknowledged, and is a memory that will live on for the rest of my days. The hundreds of volunteers who carry out this work are absolutely brilliant, show a true Christian heart and fully deserve the recognition this award brings.” Interestingly, during his address to the Big Society award winners, the Prime Minister quoted Mahatma Ghandi: *‘The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.’*

More Than Gold:

The summer of 2012 was taken up with the Olympic Games and Street Angels – CNI Network was a key partner in recruiting three hundred volunteer ‘Games Pastors’ who offered help and assistance in and around major train stations in London. This initiative, part of ‘More Than Gold,’ became a re-assuring presence in train stations. ‘Games Pastors’ chatted to visitors to the city helping them understand the underground system, spent time listening to several who were feeling suicidal and counselled one person who arrived at Euston asking which underground line he needed to get to the football match taking place in 2 hours time at Hampden Park – Glasgow! The chair of SA-CNI, Trevor Bendrien and wife Helen, had a vision for a trailer that drops down into a stage and so set about modifying his trailer to create this. The result was two weeks of travelling around London setting up the stage and, working with musicians from around the world, offering music, dance and drama in estates, on high streets and in parks.

Helen Bendrien writes:

“It was a crazy idea, but sometimes, when things seem outlandish, don’t make sense and are ‘out of the blue’, it can be Gods way of getting you to step outside your normal parameters. So after a few days of working on our box trailer we ended up with a mobile stage - laden with our PA system and even some coloured lights for evening events and flags of the nations to boot. ‘Share Jesus International’ was working with ‘More Than Gold’ to put together a creative programme in London to run concurrently with the Olympics. Working with Street Angels – CNI Network, they had put together an itinerary of church groups, who had achieved permissions for performing Christian music in public out-door spaces.

Some good friends based in and around London offered use of their home as a base to work from, which was truly amazing and an oasis to rest after some long days.

Once we arrived in the London area, the originally packed and demanding schedule began to thin out as some groups had permissions refused, delayed or cancelled. The very first booking for a three day event was rumoured to have had permission withdrawn just the day before the first event. Knowing full well that we have an enemy bent on scuppering plans, we went to the venue anyway and set up the trailer to at least challenge the opposition. Young people from many countries began to gather - they brought drums, instruments, singers and dancers

from their homelands the length and breadth of the globe. The authorities still wouldn't allow us to power up the PA, but the youngsters went ahead and performed acoustically and went throughout the park area sharing Jesus with those (who were many), using it.

We spent the next three weeks facilitating the outreach of church groups from predominantly non-British backgrounds. They were enthusiastic and prepared to get out on the streets and share the love and reality of Jesus with those they met. The musicianship of the bands we hosted was brilliant and the people of the churches really got behind the events and worked hard with passersby. Even though quite a few events suffered very last minute cancellations, some groups managed to obtain permission at only a few days notice, which in itself, was quite miraculous considering some of the difficulties we had encountered. We witnessed lives amazingly changed, people helped, God's servants stepping out in faith and opposition challenged and conquered. God's praises went out through the air and filled the suburbs of London both daytime and evenings. There were awe inspiring testimonies broadcast in shopping centres, parks, squares and streets reaching ears and hearts and having effects we could never quantify. Church groups have been encouraged long term to continue to step outside their buildings to engage with the wide population.

The 'Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International' (FGBMFI) UK were very supportive by donating sponsorship for the trailer and supplied, hand in hand with FGBMFI in Nigeria and Canada, Olympic themed Voice magazines full of stories from athletes. Twenty five thousand magazines were freely given out across London and throughout the UK as the Olympic Flame visited every community.

'Share Jesus International' and 'More Than Gold' were excellent co-ordinating venues, bands, dates and attending events when possible. Overall it was an excellent two weeks of helping bring music, dance, joy, fun and hope to housing estates, shopping streets, parks, community venues and individuals."

A few days at the Edinburgh Festival brought together seventeen volunteers from several projects to see what could be done in the city over one of the busy Festival weekends. We also supported the work of 'Festival Angels' at Leeds Festival which is paving the way for work at major music festival events in future years through a Festival Network (see the Leeds Festival Angels story later on in the book).

Street Angels Spain:

New projects continue to launch across the UK and one of the most recent project launches was in Majorca. Initiated by Cameron and Abi Springthorpe, Cameron is a yacht skipper who moved to the island a few years ago. During 2012 they led teams from Santa Ponsa Community Church on prayer walks around the infamous resort of Magaluf and met regularly with others concerned for the town to pray and seek God for the best way to help. The resort has become a haven for young British holiday-makers and over the summer unruly behaviour, fights, uncontrolled prostitution rings, binge drinking, sexual assaults, robbery and violent crime are rising, alongside an increase in fatal falls from hotel balconies and deaths caused by swimming at night whilst under the effects of alcohol. Seeing the need, Cameron had discussions with various people and the local council about solutions to the problems and in particular those on the fringes of the resort who were, or could become vulnerable in some way.

At the start of 2013, BBC television ran a week of programmes based on Magaluf, highlighting some of the horrors of the resort over the previous season. This was the base for an opening with the Police and refreshed talks began.

Amazingly during the same week, Paul was interviewed on 'BBC Radio Leeds' on a "one on one" feature – the previous hour they had talked about Magaluf and so one of the first questions Martin Kelner, the interviewer, asked was, "*so then when are Street Angels launching in Magaluf?*" Thinking quickly the response was, "*we have a vision for European holiday resorts like Magaluf and it is something we are seriously looking into it*". On Paul's return home an email was waiting from Cameron asking about the possibility of Street Angels in Majorca!

The next few months were a time of planning, recruiting and training volunteers with a launch date set for June 2013. The Police suggested starting in a neighbouring and quieter resort of Santa Ponsa just so the team could gain experience and the logistics of working in partnership could be worked out before expanding to the much bigger resort of Magaluf.

The launch weekend saw Paul and Jean Blakey join twenty four volunteers: a mixture of British ex-pats and Spanish locals, on the streets of Santa Ponsa. The first weekends have seen the teams make links with bar owners and staff; reunite one couple who had lost the hotel they were staying in, with their hotel; discourage one large group drinking on the beach from going for a midnight swim; and prevent some palm tree related injuries! The team have reported a positive

reaction from everyone they have talked to. The Friday night group also had a walk around Magaluf at 1.30am on Saturday and looked at the best areas to base the patrols in.

The weekend launch was featured extensively on the media including 'SKY News', 'The Daily Telegraph', 'BBC Look North', 'BBC Radio Leeds' and 'El Mundo' (Spain's biggest on-line and second biggest printed newspaper) as well as local publications and TV in Majorca. 'The Daily Telegraph' quoted Cameron as saying, "*Didn't Jesus walk among prostitutes and tax collectors?*" to which the Daily Telegraph commented, "*Hopefully he'll only find prostitutes in Magaluf.*"

Cameron said in a Mallorca Daily News interview:

"Over the last couple of years seeing news report about on-going trouble in Magaluf and living in El Torro – Magaluf is almost on our doorstep, so we felt we should do something. Close friends of ours had set up Street Angels in Scarborough, seven years ago, so we knew about it from them. My wife and I are members of 'Santa Ponsa Community Church' and we wanted to do something practical to help people get home safely, our friends at church also felt the same."

*

Over the 2014 season the group moved to the resort of Magaluf and ran weekend mornings between 4am and 7am. This move kept the team very busy and showed the impact that having frontline patrols can have within one of Spain's busiest resorts. They are already planning the 2015 season!

It is hoped that the Majorca Street Angels can become a blue-print for work in other European resorts in the coming years and will be a credible answer to some of the issues around the British binge drink culture.

streetangels.es

Club Angels:

Another exciting development is the way Street Angels has opened doors to other areas of need within the night-time economy. In Leeds, Beth Tash – the Street Angels co-ordinator and an Anglican Pioneer Minister for the night-time economy – saw that many of the issues on the street started inside the clubs. Beth mentioned this to the manager of ‘Tiger Tiger’ in Leeds at the regular PubWatch meeting. The decision was made to have volunteer ‘Club Angels’ inside the venue wearing t-shirts saying *“chat, help, listen and care – p.s. we are Christians ask us more if you want”* who would simply hang out in the queues, at the entrance, in the toilet and smoking areas and on the dance floor. They would pray at the start of the night and ask God to highlight to them people and individuals where they could make an impact. Very quickly, they began to see all sorts of amazing conversations and incidents happening. One such story included a young lady who had a miscarriage earlier in the day and had gone out to drink as her way of coping with what had happened. The Club Angels spent most of the night with her, were able to pray and chat with her and signpost her to other organisations, and she went on her way from the club seeming more at peace and aware of how she might access further support.

Due to the success at ‘Tiger Tiger’, Club Angels launched in the Leeds University Student Union Bar with similar success. The management and door-staff of both clubs report that when Club Angels are at work in the club there is a better atmosphere and less aggression and violence.

The night Paul and Jean visited the Club Angels had spent time praying and asked God to highlight those people with words of encouragement and challenge for them. One young man received and wrote down – “girl in beret – brunette; penguin – distress and searching; ‘A’ – family problems”. An hour later, stood at the entrance of the club, the volunteer spotted two girls in berets – one blonde, one brunette closely followed by a man in a penguin outfit! The two beret clad girls separated, leaving the brunette and the penguin stood side by side close to the Club Angels banner and table. The volunteer approached the girl, showed her the card and she was linked to the person ‘A’ who was going through a divorce. As she moved away (well someone ran up to her and literally picked her up and ran off with her) the Club Angel moved onto the penguin. He showed him the card and asked if distress and searching meant anything. The penguin shared about his life at the moment and some of the distress he was having then said, “searching – I used to be a Catholic, but am not sure what to believe – what do you suggest?” An in-depth conversation followed!

The club chain are so impressed with the impact of Club Angels that they are wanting to see the initiative replicated in nine of its clubs nationally and fifty in Central London. Twelve months after the Leeds launch 'Croydon Club Angels' was started, headed up by Lucy Hardy, and have begun to make a positive impact on the 'Tiger Tiger' club in Croydon on Thursday student nights.

Club Angels teams now run in Bristol and Dundee with other venues, including Aylesbury, Belfast, Oldham, Piccadilly London and Telford looking to launch in the near future.

clubangels.org.uk

Continuing to grow:

In Scarborough the Street Angels scheme has opened doors to 'Youth Angels' and 'Community Angels'. The Youth Angels interact with young people who gather on the beach and in the park and offer them safe people to chat with and activities such as table tennis and youth nights. Scarborough council also approached the Street Angels group to set up Community Angels who will work in an housing estate offering help and assistance where needed and signposting people to other agencies who can offer help and advice.

Several areas are also linking with 'ROC' (Redeeming Our Communities) and running initiatives such as 'ROC Cafe' – a multi-agency young people's work.

*

CNI Network has contributed to developing an 'Alcohol and Safety Education Resource' alongside Tony Buck, a schools worker with 'Christian Initiative in Calderdale Schools'. The pack aims to gauge what young people know about alcohol and present some of the facts with real stories from weekend Street Angel patrols woven in. The Stockton Town Pastors scheme has developed an accredited training course which offers volunteers with a qualification in 'Supporting Users of the Night-time Economy' and has seen several volunteers receive this qualification. We have also produced a TV series – 'Making The Difference' - which tells the story of local projects and some of our partner organisations in a relaxed chat style format.

*

The story of Street Angels was also included in the programme at 'Festival of Life' in Manchester Arena in July 2013 when Paul shared the story and led the congregation of almost ten thousand in praying for young people. The 'Festival of Life' is organised by Redeemed Christian Church of God, one of the UK's fastest growing church networks, and Paul and Jean, along with Rebekah Brettle from Neighbourhood Prayer Network were guests of Pastor Tunde Balogun of Kingsborough Family Church in Uxbridge.

The first edition eBook was launched at our National Conference in August 2013. This conference was attended by ninety three people representing forty two projects and was a great weekend of up-skilling volunteers with comprehensive training and opportunity to network. The life of CNI Network has continued to develop and grow with new communities coming on board. Some figures released in April 2014 and reported widely in the media show that alcohol related violence and alcohol related A&E admissions have reduced year on year in the UK over the last decade. This cultural change is very much part of every volunteer's story and to celebrate and recognise this CNI Network has produced a 'Volunteers are amazing – thank you!' booklet which was launched at an Afternoon Tea reception in Lambeth Palace. The booklet is to be offered to every volunteer in our family of local projects. The Lambeth Palace event included talks from the Home Office and Cabinet Office who both thanked the volunteers and praised the work of CNI Network and the local projects. The day also launched our 20:15:10 year of celebration when NightLight in Belfast celebrates twenty years, Street Chaplains in Dundee fifteen years and Street Angels in Halifax ten years in 2015.

*

It really is incredible to be part of this amazing journey and to travel the UK (and Majorca) meeting amazing people who invest so much of who they are into communities at night and those who are out and about within those communities. Street Angels – CNI Network is a people movement and the impact of reduced crime, changed lives, community transformation from 'binge to better' shows that people equipped and inspired can make the difference! The MBE and Big Society Award are a reward for everyone involved in this incredible work!

Part 2:
Stories from across ROC
Angels Network.....

Aldershot Town Centre Pastoral Team

George Newton (vicar and founder Aldershot Town Centre Pastoral Team) writes:

The origins of the 'Town Centre Pastoral Team' (TCPT) are at Holy Trinity Aldershot. On his arrival as a new church leader in 1999, George Newton discovered the church to be hidden from its community in almost every way and decided to make outreach a priority from then on. From 1999 – 2002 he and a small team from the church visited every house and dwelling in the parish as well as every shop, office and factory, building bridges, taking gifts and opening doors for faith conversations. This was a positive time that saw some growth. However, the church was mainly elderly and lacking motivation in this area, so a decision was made in 2003 to appoint and pay for a full time Community and Outreach Worker. Jonathan Wiggam arrived to this post mid 2004 having done three years training with Church Army.

A season of new and novel outreaches started, again seeing some fruit and encouragement and with more in the church becoming motivated.

One area of the town that had escaped any form of outreach was the nightlife. Essentially it was described as a 'war zone' and not for the likes of church leaders! With a big Army presence and several big pubs and night clubs, it certainly had a reputation for a lot of incidents and crime. As a one-off, George and Jonathan decided to do a night-time outreach one Friday night and managed to persuade two other foolhardy folk to join in. A certain amount of research was done to see if anyone in the country was doing much in this area. Apart from a nightclub chaplain in Bristol, nothing else was discovered, so we set out with no model to go on.

That first night we set out in a very nervous state and had prayed with considerable earnestness beforehand! We assumed we were going into a dark and godless place and putting ourselves into considerable danger! Certainly some of the advice we got was not to proceed with this. At some point after 10pm we went out, setting up a table on a wide pavement near many of the larger drinking establishments. We put some water bottles and bars of chocolate on the tables with a few tracts and church leaflets and stood there like lemons, not knowing what to do.

Before long one or two revellers came up to us and asked what we were doing. Nervously, we replied we were from the local church and were there to talk with people. Before long we were in multiple evangelistic conversations. We found people opening up and sharing deep things from their heart. Despite being one of the most un-churched towns in the area, many also asked for prayer. Yes, we saw lots of fights and antisocial behaviour on the streets; we saw injuries and the Police moving in hard. When we returned in the early hours, we looked at each other rather stunned. God was at work. In those few hours we had experienced more Jesus-centred conversations than in the last several months put together. Slightly to our horror, we recognised we needed to do this regularly! So, at that time, we started to go out just once a month.

Initially we had forgotten even to inform the Police. They certainly did give us some strange looks over the first few months until they found out who we were and what we were doing. For some Police Officers this was the first they had come across such a thing, so some of them still looked on with a degree of suspicion for some time afterwards! Yet, within a couple of years they were coming to us, having noticed that when we were out, crime and incident rates dropped significantly.

They saw that people who were known trouble makers, coming out of drinking establishments, would come via our table, calm down and leave peacefully.

In 2007 when other organisations like Street Pastors and Street Angels were becoming known nationally, the Police invited us to be out, not just one night a month, but every Friday and Saturday night.

George agreed to this, indicating this was possible, but that this would be done on our own terms, incorporating a day time team as well. We recruited volunteers from all the churches in the town, leading to the formation of the 'Town Centre Pastoral Team' on 1st May 2008. George was Project Manager and Gwen Wills a voluntary Administrator.

Since then we have maintained an active group of between thirty and forty members. A number also commit to praying for the team and the prayer requests that come in week by week; (up to eighty in some weeks!). Teams of around four go out Friday and Saturday nights and a similar number in the day time on Thursdays (market day).

The impact has been considerable. Crime rates in the town centre have dropped over the years considerably. The daytime team were soon offered a stall in the shopping centre for all months except December and have pioneered a number of interesting and alternative pastoral outreach schemes. The church was suddenly on the map for organisations such as the Council as well as the Police and are now included in many committees and discussions. Individuals have come to Alpha courses, church and to faith. Rather introverted churches are now much more outward-looking. Monthly team meetings are well attended and have a good deal of fervent prayer. The team are somewhat more proactive in sharing their faith than some other schemes and many answers to prayer and healings are reported back on a regular basis. Each year we reckon we receive at least two thousand prayer requests and about a third of those are people that will be prayed for on the spot with a laying on of hands.

We believe that God is opening new doors through this and one area we hope to expand into is the local GP surgeries and Health Centres.

Arun Angels – Bognor Regis

Derek Baker (co-ordinator Arun Angels) writes:

It's a Friday evening and the team of Angels is patrolling a local shopping parade. One of the team member spots a woman who appears agitated so smiles and asks if all is well. The woman responds 'no', but also asks who the team of hi-vis uniformed Angels are. She soon says that the Angels are just what she needs as her daughter is over an hour late home from school, after arranging to go to a friend's house. It's too soon to involve the Police, but the anxious mother is grateful for the help of the Angels. The team of five Angels deploys into a two and a three carefully identifying the best skill set within the team to do a quick search of the area and to wait by the shops to liaise with mum. Within an hour, the daughter arrives home without needing further help, but the mum is hugely grateful for the reassurance and help provided by the Angels.

The next night, another team of Angels are out in a neighbouring town. It's after midnight and the team walks around a corner to see a pub doorman seeking to separate two groups of people intent on verbal aggression and the situation seems to be escalating. Immediately the team swing into action, not physically intervening, but seeking to engage with the various people involved in an attempt to calm or deflect some of the aggression. Meanwhile, another team member alerts the Police using the "pubwatch" radio. Within minutes, Police are on the scene but they have nothing to do as the doorman and team of Angels have already calmed the situation and everyone is amicable. The team soon move on around the corner to be confronted with a taxi office receptionist struggling to help a very wobbly regular customer into a taxi. The team assist with helping the man to his feet, into the seat and on with his seat belt. The receptionist says "I don't know what I'd have done without you".

The teams are Arun Angels volunteers who work in the Arun District around Bognor Regis and Littlehampton on the South coast of England. Since 2009, a late night pub/club patrol has operated in Bognor Regis town centre and since October 2012, a twilight evening patrol has operated around a large housing estate on the outskirts of Littlehampton. The teams are all volunteers from the local churches. Before starting out on each patrol they will often pray, that they will be in the right place at the right time and able to respond to those people who might need some reassurance and help. Arun Angels is part of the national Street Angels – CNI Network. All volunteers go through a recruitment and training

process involving references, CRB/DBS checks and training sessions that include personal safety.

Our gratitude and a special thank you go to all those who pray for Street Angels projects across the country.

Aylesbury Town Chaplaincy

Catherine Turnbull-Ross (administrator - Aylesbury Town Chaplaincy)

Mark Knight (co-ordinator Aylesbury Town Chaplaincy Chaplains & Street Angels) write:

From around 2008 some of the church leaders in Aylesbury began looking at various Christian night-time initiatives in the local and national area with a view of beginning something like 'Street Pastors' in Aylesbury. As time went on, and following meetings with Richard Chewter, the Watford Town Centre Chaplain the desire emerged for a more integrated model covering both day-time (chaplains) and night-time (street angels). In late 2010 Richard spoke at a joint service, and from that a volunteer 'administrator' came forward to help to the project begin in earnest.

There followed a period of intensive research into local chaplaincies (High Wycombe, Luton and Watford) to see how they worked and how they got started. A framework plan was developed and the backing of local church leaders across the spectrum gained, so that work on fundraising, charity governance and policies & procedures began in earnest during 2011 and into 2012; all of which was covered in prayer. In tandem, meetings were held with representatives of the local police, the local authority, the town council and business communities to explain our plans. All were overwhelmingly positive and could not wait for us to begin, and in fact, pestered us as to when we would get started.

Throughout this period, we were aiming to set up strong foundations and a sustainable model. We wanted to ensure that what we brought to Aylesbury was a quality service and we could continue to work in partnership with all the agencies who were supporting us both financially and verbally. In September 2011 we set up a charitable trust, in July 2012 registering with the charity commission. We appointed a part-time Street Angels co-ordinator (who combines this with his role as a Community Pastor in one of the town's churches). In addition a part-time administrator in May 2012 and a local assistant minister was seconded from one of the town's churches to co-ordinate recruitment and deployment of chaplains.

We began recruitment of volunteers from the local churches at about this time, and appointed our first chaplain in July 2012 and our first Street Angel in August 2012. By October we had sufficient Street Angels who had undergone initial training to begin planning our first deployment.

On Friday 2 November 2012 – around 4 years since the idea had first started – our first Street Angel team was out on the streets of Aylesbury! Since then on one night each weekend (either a Friday or a Saturday) a team of Street Angels has been in the town centre from around 10.30pm to 3am. Aylesbury is a relatively small market town, but as with anywhere, has its share of rowdy, drunken and dangerous behaviour.

From the beginning we have worked in close liaison with the police, the local authority and 'PubWatch'. The doormen and police officers on duty look out for the Street Angels and know what they are there for and have confidence in them to deal with certain people and/or incidents. The members of the public we come into contact with are also positive and supportive (albeit sometimes through a drunken haze).

Some stories from our nights out over the first six months:

Initially they were quiet weeks - but this really helped in giving the time to be able to build relationships with the local police officers on duty and the door people at the various pubs, clubs and restaurants.

Mark, the co-ordinator was invited to attend both 'PubWatch' and the 'Night-time economy forum' – both places where we are able to contribute to a safer Aylesbury and bring a positive Christian presence into sometimes difficult discussions.

Having wipes and water available, we are able to help people clean up when they have vomited and/or been hurt by falling or being hit.

Small amounts of money mean we are able to buy a burger for a homeless person or pay for a taxi fare home.

Good relationships are being built with the licensed cab drivers, who appreciate what we're doing & willing to work in partnership with us.

We give out flat shoes to girls with sore feet, struggling to balance on their high heels. Sit with girls who had argued with their boyfriend; and for example, on girl's boyfriend had taken away her bag, keys, money. All the while the Street Angels offer silent prayer about the situation. A friend came by & saw her and looked after her.

We also pick up bottles/broken glass & putting it in the bin out of harm's way.

One night there were two couples in their late teens ejected from one of the pubs. One lad had a nasty gash and bruised eye following a flare up about another lad dancing with his girl. The Street Angels gave out swabs and water to them giving us time to talk and they slowly calmed down and took a taxi home.

We have managed on several occasions to distract drunken people who have been making a scene and trying to get back into venues after being asked to leave. We managed to defuse a likely fight between two groups of about half a dozen people. One said he was a born again Christian and we managed to get him away whilst the other guy was still abusing him. We managed to get the abuser to give up and walk away. We praised the guy for walking away and said God bless you (to the guy who said he was the Christian)

Reminding one of the retailers to keep outside lights on which means a narrow alley is well lit and not a dangerous dark place; assisting a girl who had been assaulted and the boy arrested are all in a night's work!

Gradually, over time, people are beginning to trust us and are asking faith questions and sharing with us their childhood experiences of church, whilst others are just asking 'what is life all about?' We have reached a stage where some folk are happy to be prayed with on the streets.

Our hope is for the Chaplaincy to be an increasing presence in every aspect of Aylesbury's character; supporting and connecting with people who live, work, visit and socialise in Aylesbury.

Bedford Street Angels

Stephen Elphick (co-ordinator Bedford Street Angels) writes:

Bedford Street Angels was born out of the tragic death of a young man, Robert Gill who died as a result of a mugging and murder on Boxing Day 2007. His adoptive parents, Fred and Fran asked the churches of the town to explore the possibility of forming a Street Angels project, to support the vulnerable who access the night time economy; to ensure there is no similar future tragedy. Bedford Street Angels has been in operation since it's launch in February 2009. The project is supported by churches from the Bedford area.

At present there are about thirty volunteers who go out onto the streets on a rota basis, coming from about twenty different churches in the area and from all denominations. They go out onto the streets from 10.30pm to 3 or 4am and they work as part of 'Bed Safe', a Bedford Borough Council initiative, which includes the Police, CCTV, Taxi Marshalls, the Emergency services, the club and pub owners and door staff. Through 'Nitenet radios', everyone is in contact with each other and the aim is to ensure that all who go out on a Saturday night enjoy themselves, but are kept safe at all times.

Whilst they do not look for recognition, it is always good to be appreciated. It is fair to say that the Police, Bedford Borough Council, and the Clubs and Pub Staff all are very supportive and agree that the Angels do make a difference. Some of the most appreciative are the kids on the streets themselves and every Saturday someone will always say a thank you. Here are some comments:

"On the night/very early morning of January the 29th/30th, me and four friends found ourselves to be very VERY cold killing an hour waiting for a taxi. Along came four of five very cosily dressed people, who were very friendly and were just having a chat with us. They told us they were the Bedford Street Angels. We were given flip flops (as inappropriate shoe choice had been discarded), scarves, hats and gloves. We cannot thank enough their kindness and generosity. By far the kindest people I have met, trying to help others on a Saturday night. Thank you so much Bedford Street Angels, the time you give up to help other people has truly warmed all of our hearts. Amazing"

"Thank you for staying with my friend the other Saturday night. Those flip flops were great! Wow, you're really cool"

"Hi I just wanted to say thank you for lending a hand and giving me some flip flops the other night on my 18th birthday! I wasn't allowed into a club as I was too drunk, and the bouncers wouldn't let me get my friends out, so I got separated from them and found myself on my own on the streets of Bedford...I was in a state, and you guys helped out. So thank you, what you guys do is amazing! If only the rest of Bedford could be more like you!"

"I am writing to say a massive thank you for helping to look after me on Sat night. I went out for an evening with a friend and drunk too much. ... I can only thank you from the bottom of my heart for what you did for me and praise you for your kindness and the work that you do."

Belfast Nightlight

John Luke (former co-ordinator Belfast Nightlight) writes:

As far back as 1989 there was uneasiness amongst some people in the church that the central Belfast area, which had undergone regeneration in the 1980s and literally "came alive" at weekends; was largely being ignored by the established Churches.

There were many church buildings in the area, but when the area was at its busiest (1.30am) they were all closed. At that time many people were out on the street going to, or coming from some place of entertainment.

The challenge was to discover, if there were a need for a ministry in the Shaftesbury Square area, and if so, whether the Presbyterian Church could meet that need. The Presbytery of Belfast South directed the Rev. Bill Moore, Minister of Taughmonagh congregation, to undertake a pilot scheme, leading a group onto the streets in the early hours of the morning.

The findings were dramatic. Thousands of people passed through the "Golden Mile" area between the hours of 11.00 p.m. and 3.00 a.m. each weekend. The group endeavoured to make contact with the individuals they encountered, and to challenge them with an alternative lifestyle through faith in Jesus Christ.

In 1991 this pilot project came to an end, not because there was no mission there, but rather because there was too much work for someone already committed to Parish ministry! The South Belfast Presbytery decided to recommend that the night Ministry project become a recognised part of the Presbyterian Church's outreach in the area. Whilst they could not entirely fund the scheme themselves, they were very willing to be partially involved. The work was recommended to a subsequent meeting of the General Assembly, and in 1995 a full-time Director, John Luke, was appointed, working under what was then the Home Board.

Throughout this process, the late Rev. Dr. Jack Weir was greatly involved. Without his vision, enthusiasm and support, Nightlight may not have reached its current stage of development.

Since September 1995, a small group of volunteer team members have been "on the streets" from 11pm to 3 or 4am on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights. They work in twos or threes through rain, hail or snow (and sometimes all three!).

Initially our point of contact will usually be to help in some practical way; perhaps to administer basic first aid, arrange Hostel accommodation for the night or 'phone for an ambulance. Often, but not always, this will open up the opportunity to speak openly of our Christian faith. It is important to remember that we have to earn the right to witness and that we must care for the needs of the whole person.

Showing love and concern for someone in this way frequently causes them to wonder why we are "putting ourselves out" for them and the relationship develops from there.

There is a clear parallel with Jesus healing the Blind man in John's Gospel. Jesus attended to His obvious physical need first, then sought him out once more and dealt with his questions and ultimately his spiritual blindness. He was committed to those in need and His ministry was directed to publicans, sinners and prostitutes; it is likely that the 'Golden Mile' is just the sort of place where Jesus would want to be.

The work of Nightlight involves a number of approaches all aimed at demonstrating a practical and relevant Christian support and help. In the 'Odyssey' the team link with staff and those enjoying the entertainment on offer at this purpose built venue. On Botanic Avenue the team share the Gospel over a cup of tea at our table and patrol the 'Golden Mile' amongst the pubs and clubs. In the 'Cathedral Quarter' the team patrol and offer help and assistance.

Contacts with people both young and old have been made. We reach out to them in whatever way is appropriate, often practical help in a wide range of situations. From stolen handbags to stabbings, from the happy to the homeless, from the lonely to the party animal, from the jilted to the totally lost – such is the multi coloured tapestry of Nightlight. It could never be described as dull or boring!

Belfast Nightlight has inspired other churches in communities across Northern Ireland to run similar initiatives with around thirty night-time projects now running offering tea and coffee from trestle tables, caravans and buildings as well as patrols around the pubs and clubs.

Belper Street Angels

Rev. Rachel Marszalek (co-ordinator Belper Street Angels) writes:

Belper Street Angels launched in June 2012 as an initiative of HOPE in Belper and have had up to seventeen people so far serving the project. Another twelve have contacted us to get started sometime in the future. Five of the Angels serve on a management team to organise the project.

The team works in estates and the town alternately so that Angels can choose for their once-monthly round either the 7pm-11pm estates round, or the 10pm until 2am town round. The volunteers have patrolled the street's town for more than six hundred hours in the first year. The team members, who range in age from twenty to nearly seventy, have engaged with the youth on Belper's estates and helped with everything from collecting broken glass to finding an engagement ring.

Volunteer Tony Ward, a retired vicar, said:

"It's been a successful first year and people welcome us. A lot of the young people we speak to have nothing to do and few job prospects. However, I'm glad to say there is comparatively very little anti-social behaviour. We spend alternate weeks on the estates and town centre. We're not the police. We're here to support people and improve our night-time culture. Much of our help has been in reassuring people, helping them get in taxis home and providing water and flip flops. There is also a lot of litter dropped at the skate park."

A lot of the activity in the estates is about building up the relationships with the young people and has included games of football and handing out cake! The team have also provided pastoral support at times of tragedy amongst the young people. It is also good to join the dots between the young people on the streets and in the local high school through 'The Bless Project,' a lunch-time initiative at out town's High School, which some of the Angels support.

The town centre team concentrates on those people visiting the pubs and the town's night-club and keeps a lookout in the town more generally, returning shopping trolleys to supermarkets, picking up bottles, handing out flip-flops and water and ensuring people get home safely. In return the team receives lots of hugs and is asked to pose for photos with revellers!

Over the year, the Street Angels team have helped with stewarding at events like the Christmas Light Switch-On, Belper Fair and the Easter Passion Play. This has helped us become part of the town centre at times other than late evening weekends and means a wider audience has met us and have a better understanding as to the work we do.

Good links have been made within the town and Belper Street Angels has support from businesses, the Police, local organisations and the town's churches. Several town centre businesses give the team free hot drinks and food with the fish and chip shop working with the Street Angels to make sure any homeless people in the town are offered fish and chips.

In the words of one of our volunteers - *'Belper folk are so friendly - it's a good place to be!'*

Boro Angels

David Gee (chair Boro Angels) writes:

Boro Angels is a project that was set up in 2009 as an expression of our Christian faith. We are an independent voluntary organisation and registered as a charity in 2011.

With a great deal of hard work and the support of a number of individuals and organisations, including some Middlesbrough churches, the first “Angels” took to the streets in January 2010.

Boro Angels volunteers patrol Middlesbrough town centre streets on a Saturday night until the early hours offering a friendly, caring, compassionate, non judgemental presence to any revellers that may need assistance. We work closely with CCTV operatives, door staff, police and other emergency services. We dispense flip flops, lollipops, water and first aid, sometimes assist people to find a way home, reunite them with friends, or simply offer a listening ear.

We find we come into contact with people with varying emotions, issues and needs. The homeless, those with relationship problems, victims of crime, addictions, health worries, the list goes on. We don't have all the answers, but we can try and point them in the direction of individuals and organisations that can help.

We continue to look to develop stronger links and partnerships with churches, voluntary groups, statutory agencies and local government, where appropriate. The aim is to help create an effective integrated service for those people we come into contact with and in the wider community.

My colleagues and I firmly believe that God is calling us to serve Him in this way, to help make Middlesbrough a safer, more caring place to be.

Please pray for the work of Boro Angels and the many other similar projects throughout the UK as we walk the streets expressing Christ's love for people.

Boscombe Street Angels

Dick Gibbons (volunteer Boscombe Street Angels) writes:

The Boscombe Angels project was set up by Churches Together in Boscombe after being approached by Guy, a young local Police Sergeant, who had been impressed with a similar project in Weymouth. One of our group says of him, *“This chap ranks as the most intelligent police officer I’ve met in over fifty years”*. A well educated giant of a man, Guy had the extraordinary vision of integrating the church and the local community via a Street Pastor type scheme. Boscombe, the once grand suburb of Bournemouth, is now blighted by the modern day problems of drug and alcohol abuse on its shopping precinct and vandalism and student partying on its golden beaches. His mission was to clean both areas up.

Held in early summer, our concept meeting had the mark of a committee meeting with the ‘Vicar of Dibley’. We had Guy and his colleagues from Weymouth in police regalia, a vicar in fancy dress on his way to a party, two or three beach chaps in flip flops and torn shorts, a local DJ with a wealth of night club knowledge and some very proper church ladies. However within weeks we were training with Guy and his chums at the rear of one of our churches, turning the air blue with simulated street and beach life scenes and wondering what we’d signed up to. Bolstered with tea and documentation from the good ladies and the fundamentals of First Aid from a lively ambulance man, we were ready for the vacation invasions of 2010.

Those summer beach patrols have progressed through wintery evenings walking the shopping precinct, chatting with the folk queuing for our solitary 1800 capacity nightclub, to mingling with rough sleepers. Many of these have alcohol, family, mental health and other life changing issues and are drawn to Boscombe by its temperate climate and its multitude of rehab houses. Converted from some of the grand Victorian houses, these have expanded in recent years to include clientele from many councils across the UK. Inevitably some end up, ‘sofa surfing’ with mates, rough sleeping on cardboard or in the local parks. This has led to the death of two this winter from pneumonia and a frightening effect on the local community. It has also provided us with a new challenge. Over winter 2012 / 13 we gave out over thirty sleeping bags, kindly donated by church members, but the need continues to increase. Amazingly the burial of one middle aged man attracted well over seventy people, indicating that people do care, but maybe are unable to react quickly enough. We would like to think that we are closing this gap, supported by a marvellous group and the support of the Lord.

We are aware that thanks to our summer efforts, beach crime is greatly reduced on the seafront, but drug and alcohol abuse continue to be a problem in the precinct. Therefore we have increased our Safety Awareness by comprehensive police training at the excellent indoor facility provided by 'LV-Streetwise'. This enables most street or beach scenes to be re-enacted with great realism and is run in partnership with Dorset Police, Dorset Fire and Rescue Service and the local authority in Bournemouth. We are also actively educating ourselves to fully understand the role of drugs in our diverse community. We continue to liaise with night-time initiatives in neighbouring towns concerning trends and the role of the Police Commissioners.

Bridlington Street Angels

Peter and Maddy Wilson (co-ordinators Bridlington Street Angels) write:

The launch of Bridlington Street Angels took place at the Graduation and Commissioning Service for our first fourteen Angels at Emmanuel Church, on Saturday 15th June 2013.

The story of how this came to be is, as ever, one of the Lord's grace, favour and provision.

For some years, several Christians in Bridlington had been praying for such an initiative to be started. They had already contacted the Street Angels in Scarborough and Beverley and several potential volunteers had been out observing with the Scarborough patrols and were raring to go. However, because of fulltime work, no one was able to be involved in meetings with the Statutory Authorities, with whom it is essential to have a good working relationship.

Around 2010 the Lord prompted Peter and Maddy Wilson who were then living and working in Wolverhampton to move back to Yorkshire (a retirement move) and live in Bridlington, which they did in August 2012 after Peter has finished his term as a City Councillor. This move meant that there were now two people not only who had the time to give to setting up a Street Angels project, but who were also trained Street Pastors, so understood a lot of the processes involved in such a project.

It just so happened that in January 2013, the National Street Angels Trustees were having a planning meeting at Lamplugh House near Bridlington. Peter and Maddy were able to join them for an evening meal and to cement relationships.

Having sixteen volunteers, (two later dropping out for family/work commitments) a training programme was devised and started in March. A local church offered its premises free for training, though we were able to give them a donation towards heating costs etc.

All our trainers gave their time for free, including the statutory ones and our base at Church House, on the Christ Church complex is provided rent free.

Of course we needed finance to buy our uniforms. We chose to use a local supplier, to help the local economy, and trusted the Lord for his provision, though several of the volunteers chose to pay for their own.

Our first grant application for local government funding was not successful, due to the interpretation of national government criteria. However just in time (it often is, isn't it?) we were given grants from the Hull-based 'Sir James Reckitt Charity' and 'The Lords Feoffees Trust', a local Bridlington charity. These paid for our uniforms and initial supplies of water, flip flops, space blankets and First Aid items. No one in the organisation is paid, though as we grow, we would like to be able to appoint a paid Coordinator.

We have a very good ongoing relationship with the Police and Local Authority. The Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for Humberside, Paul Robinson, chose to attend our graduation service in order to show their support for the project and both he and the Humberside Police & Crime Commissioner, Matthew Grove, expressed an interest in joining us on patrol. So far Paul Robinson has been out on patrol with us, about which he said: *"What a fabulous evening really enjoyed it and thank you for taking me out with you. I learnt quite a lot from the evening which has given me much food for thought."*

At the time of writing we have a patrol every Saturday night apart from the fifth Saturday in the month which we plan to cover when we have trained more Street Angels. We are always very well received by public, police and door staff. Each night is unique and we never fail to have some positive stories of the Lord's goodness to relate. We look forward to an exciting and peaceful future.

Calla

Tam Sheen (founder Calla) writes:

Back in 2008 a number of us had met together regularly to eat and fellowship. Part of the evening was always devoted to breaking bread and talking about mission. On one of these Thursday evenings the conversation turned to the nightlife in the town and how we might be able to serve the customers of the local nightclub in a practical way. Out of this inspired evening the project 'Sanktuary' was birthed. We had seen the need to provide a safe place for people leaving the club, voluntarily or not, and a night time café was set up in the rooms of a local church. What we didn't realise was that this would also be part of the birth of 'Calla'.

What we saw on the streets that first Christmas changed many of us. It was clear that the night time economy wasn't limited to the nightclub and taxis, internal trafficking (or a 'drugs and prostitution ring' as it was known then) was part of this night time world too. We saw the perpetrators picking out young girls who were then drawn into a world that most of them didn't know existed. We felt compelled to do something but at that point, most people were not aware that this type of crime existed at all, let alone in a market town in Shropshire.

But how could we help? Two issues were immediate concerns:

Firstly, how do we keep ourselves safe if we were going to get involved? This is organised crime with a gang culture.

Secondly, how do we access training and develop our understanding of this complex issue?

We wanted, in our naivety, to make things better, not ruin further the lives of those affected. We needed help and, as most of us were Christians, our starting point was prayer mixed with a dogged determination. We knew we had to do something, but what?

To begin with we studied every Home Office document that existed on the subject. Information was key. Learning to read and assimilate long documents became a skill. Then a chance meeting with Detective Chief Inspector of the local Police, who was working in this field, led to reading more documents and an invitation to join the 'Regional Anti-Trafficking group'. The group comprises of Police, 'UK

Border Agency', MPs, 'Social Services', 'Crown Prosecution Service', 'UK Human Trafficking Centre' and a number of other local organisations working within the anti-trafficking arena.

Becoming part of this group led to travelling across the UK, knocking on the doors of existing projects and asking for help and training in the area of sexual exploitation and trafficking. Over three years and we met some incredible people doing amazing work. People and organisations committed to anti-trafficking who literally have given their lives to working in this area. We learnt the signs; we trained others; we helped victims; we learnt that being involved in a wider network was crucial.

We realised that trafficking was a complex issue and was poorly understood, or even acknowledged, so there was virtually no help available. Accessing the correct services for victims and their parents, was almost impossible at that point, but because we were available and willing, some of the victims began to speak to us. They wanted to be believed; they wanted a safe place to rest and they desperately wanted to get out of the situation they found themselves in. Often the gang were dangerous and threats were made and often followed through. We met parents whose children were caught up in this. They were at their wits end, with (mainly) daughters who were suicidal or disappearing for nights or weeks at a time. We listened, we believed and we gave safe places to rest, even if only for a limited time.

Here's a story from a parent's perspective of someone who Calla helped. Of course, the names have been changed, but the story is in their words.

"Like many fourteen year olds our daughter had struggled to find confidence. She had been bullied and felt isolated from her peers. So she was pleased when she was befriended by a woman in her late teens outside of school one day. This new friend took my daughter shopping and introduced her over time to a young man in his late teens who became her boyfriend. They showered her with gifts: new mobile phones, clothes, hair extensions and fake tans. Having struggled to form friendships, it was reassuring to see her finally going to parties and having an active social life. Yet, over the next few months, something became obviously wrong. She was insistent on leaving the house at odd hours, especially once she was supposedly in bed. The front door would close quietly at 3am. Mysterious cars would park outside our house and drop her off after school. She also stopped eating and sleeping. She was caught shoplifting several times. It seemed odd that she was so attentive to her new friends, and yet so unhappy. So we did

what many parents would have done. We encouraged her to invite her friends into our home so we could get to know them. We were making cups of tea for the very young men who were sexually exploiting our daughter. One day the police turned up on our doorstep. We finally understood.

My husband and I have an extremely close relationship with our daughter. When we tried to comfort her and reassure her that she herself had done nothing wrong, she broke down and told us she had contemplated on taking her own life. But she was unable to tell us the full extent of the abuse she suffered and was only able to talk about what happened to other girls and what she witnessed. Horrific accounts.

Now that we knew, our daughter made her own decision to withdraw from the gang. She did but this led to her being followed and threatened. We as a family were threatened with violence, and our home with being firebombed.

Of course, we spoke to the police, handing them vital evidence such as photos posted on Facebook, addresses of where the so-called parties were held. We logged car registration numbers and the times of their arrivals and departures. The gang knew we had spoken to the police and made it known to our family that they were not happy. There were more cars and some parked outside our house for days on end. I was followed and 'bumped into' by strange men.

Who could we turn to for protection and support? The gang seemed to operate with impunity; local girls were still being exploited and they made it clear they thought they were above the law. But to our frustration, we were left to our own devices. There was no specialist 'Child Sexual Exploitation Police Division' to turn to at that time. Apart from one or two exceptional officers, we were on our own.

But our relationship with our daughter was strained to breaking point. We knew the abuse had left her suicidal. We desperately tried to seek out mental health support for her, but none of the counsellors she saw seemed equip to deal with the complexity of grooming and child sexual exploitation. This is when 'Calla' became very important for us as a family. It stood outside of any governmental body and could offer impartial advice and support. It wasn't frightening. The main thing was that they listened to us and they believed us, without any judgement. People from 'Calla' stood with us for, not just a week but a number of years. Through 'Calla' we were introduced to a number of organisations who helped us access specialist support not only for our daughter but also for us as a family.

Our story has a happy ending. Our daughter is now blissfully married to a man who loves her. And, finally, after years of some excellent police work, some of the gang members have received justice and are serving prison sentences.”

Carmarthen NightLight

Coralie Steel (co-ordinator Carmarthen NightLight) writes:

Carmarthen NightLight was set up by 'Carmarthen CYTUN' (Churches Together in Wales) after an approach from the police on behalf of the 'Carmarthenshire Community Safety Partnership' and the scheme has received funding from the 'Community Safety Partnership' as well as donations from local churches and a grant from the 'St. David's Diocese Venturing in Mission Fund'.

After the initial approach, a small Steering Group of representatives from The Salvation Army, St. Peter's Church, St. Mary's RC Church, Llangunnor Church and Towy Community Church was set up and met for the first time on 2nd June 2009. The first training sessions (given by the police) were held in the autumn of 2010 and the first Street Team went out on 15th January 2011. Our street teams have been very well received by the people on the streets as well as the police, door-people and paramedics and we receive lots of hugs and handshakes when we're out! We've helped many young (and not so young) people in trouble, including two young girls aged 12 or 13 whom we found in the centre of town at 2 a.m., one of them feeling so ill she was hardly able to walk.

We have volunteers from ten local churches and chapels who go out on the streets between about 11 p.m. on Saturday and 3.30 a.m. on Sunday mornings, carrying water, first aid, flip flops for women who can no longer wear their shoes and lollipops for anyone who wants one.

We hope that our presence on the streets will make a difference to the late-night atmosphere in Carmarthen as well as helping non-church-goers understand a little of what being a Christian means.

Dundee – ROCK Street Chaplains

Reverend Andy Burns (founder Dundee ROCK Street Chaplains) writes:

“Maybe we should do something at night to reach out to the clubbers”.

This comment was the seed that started ‘ROCK Street Chaplains’ in Dundee. Street Chaplains started in Dundee City centre in 2000 when two men got a group of young people together and ventured out onto the streets of Dundee’s nightclub area with a few Christian leaflets and some lollies. Street Chaplains has become a big part of the nightclub and night-time economy life in the city.

The team co-coordinator is Reverend Andy Burns who started the ministry. Andy studied theology in Edinburgh and Switzerland before moving to Scotland with his wife and family. Andy is one of the trustees of CNI Network.

Teams of Street Chaplains are on the streets of Dundee three nights a week - Wednesday, Friday and Saturday - starting with a time of prayer and a briefing. The team is then on the streets from 10.30pm until - well we have no stop time - we go home when we feel that we are no longer needed!

Over the years we have chatted to door-staff, nightclub promoters, DJ’s, club and bar managers and work closely with Police Scotland (Tayside).

One of the most rewarding parts of our ministry is working with the homeless. We give out hot drinks and link them with other organisations that can help them. Over the years we have had some come to faith and join our teams.

Many people ask us “does it work” - how can a few volunteers on the streets at night chatting and helping drunk people make an impact for the kingdom of God? Our simple answer to that question is – “yes, it does help!”

Over the years many people have found a relationship with the Lord Jesus. From pole dancers to military - it would take too long to tell you on paper, (maybe one day we’ll write our own book).

Street Chaplains worked on the streets of Dundee under the radar for a number of years, I mean we had no special coats or identity. However in 2004 we were contacted by Tayside Police asking us what we do at night and how they could they help us.

The outcome of this partnership was that the police supplied us with red coats, and also over the years since 2004, we have built up relationships with departments in Dundee City Council. Street Chaplains are involved with the 'DUNCAN' programme - an anti crime network - and are also involved in different festivals in the city such as the 'Blues Festival' in early July.

Street Chaplains are linked and supported by most of the churches in the city with many of our team members attending them. This gives us accountability to the church in the city and also helps us to link into different events such as the Christmas light night in December when the church, the city council and Street Chaplains work together to hold an event in the city square. This event can attract around twenty thousand people.

It is the individuals that we work with, from someone on the bridge who wants to commit suicide to a group of ladies out on a hen party: Street Chaplains will be there for them.

*

In September 2013 Street Chaplains made a link with students at both Universities in Dundee. Through partnership with UCCF (University and Colleges Christian Fellowship) we help run hot chocolate tables every second week on a Tuesday night in the student area. In connection with this we have set up hot drinks tables in Dundee city centre twice a month on Friday nights from 10pm till late.

Club Chaplains started in November 2013 in the Vu Nightclub in Dundee. At the start it was once a month but since that time we have developed relationships with management and at this present time we have extended Club Chaplains to other clubs in Dundee city centre.

We give God the praise for these open doors and trust that as we develop this ministry we will be able to get more people into teams to help this work grow.

Another new development is Festival Chaplains which has seen us at Montrose Fest, Brecon Festival and Edinburgh Festival. We continue to develop this work and link in with Festival Network which supports this much needed work.

Exmouth - Open Door Nightshift Project

Ali Withers (volunteer Exmouth Open Door Nightshift) writes:

About three years ago a 'gentleman's club' opened in Exmouth offering topless and nude dancing. The Nightshift teams would see a stretch limousine bring the girls to work and later in the evening saw the girls having a cigarette at the back door, usually wrapped in an overcoat over their outfits. One member of the Nightshift team, Ali, started talking to them and really felt that the Nightshift Project should be blessing them.

Ali was initially talked out having any contact with the girls, but just before Christmas in 2011, she spoke to some of the other members of the team and we had a collection. Ali approached the manager of the club and after talking on the phone, she agreed that we could anonymously give some gifts and include a message to the girls who danced at the club.

Ali made four gift bags, one for each of the girls. The bags contained some chocolate and make up. She also included the message "With God's love at Christmas because you are special". Not long afterwards the manager approached one of our teams to thank us, which was a huge step forward. We decided to give a gift at Easter and again for Christmas last year.

It may only be a little thing, but we are reaching out to let the girls know they are loved. Only God knows where the relationships we are building will lead, but we are walking in obedience with God's prompting to show his love.

Fleet Town Centre Project

Nigel Pool (co-ordinator Fleet Town Centre Project) writes:

In 2006 Churches Together in Fleet & Crookham organised a Week of Prayer for the community. During the week, a converted double deck bus was used to provide a temporary base in a variety of public spaces. Towards the end of the week it was decided that it would be interesting to see what happened if the bus was placed in the high street late at night and volunteers gave away free hot drinks and biscuits.

The overwhelmingly good response led to a small group exploring the idea of a regular outreach on Friday and Saturday nights. With encouragement from the Police, various locations were explored, but in the end it was decided that the bus was unsuitable, particularly because, as an enclosed space, it might discourage people from coming on board and therefore from engaging with the volunteers.

It seemed that God had another plan! As soon as we had made the decision not to use the bus, a local pub offered the use of four spaces in their car park (directly opposite the night club!) for a stall. They also offered free electricity for our kettles, and a place to put a shed to store our equipment in their compound at the rear of the pub.

The first official night for the Project was Friday 14th December 2007. Saturday nights were started on the 4th of October 2008.

The Team usually comprises four volunteers – two on the stall and two walking around the town. It is a small area with the pubs and nightclub close together. The stall (a popup gazebo) gives away free tea, coffee, hot chocolate, Jammie Dodgers and Party Rings! And of course we give away lollipops and flip-flops. Many young people struggle with the idea of accepting a free drink, we do our best not to accept any donations but sometimes a gift is left on the table. “God’s love is free and so is the tea!” How do we get people to recognise that the most valuable gift of all is absolutely free?

The Project has the full support of all eleven congregations in the town and is run as an official ‘Churches Together in Fleet and Crookham Project’. This ‘togetherness’ is really valuable as we build relationships with other organisations and agencies and often prompts questions from those we meet on the streets.

The public perception is usually one of division not cohesion and it is great to have the opportunity to paint a different picture.

Fleet is now probably one of the safest places to go out at night, but it did have a very bad reputation. Like many other towns, the recession has had an impact and there are fewer people out on the streets at night. Good working partnerships amongst a variety of agencies have also reduced the levels of crime in the night time economy, but our presence is still needed and greatly valued. In 2012 some volunteers started a regular weekly outreach to a local army base.

Guildford Street Angels

Fiona Ford (Co-ordinator, Guildford Street Angels)

Guildford Street Angels was inspired and modelled on the Watford Street Angels and first hit the streets of Guildford one Friday night in October 2008. We have had a very positive influence on the Town and the Police told us at the end of that first year that public place violent crime had gone down by 29% on the nights we were out. We then added Saturday nights and later, Monday nights as well. Monday is 'student night' - with a University and several other educational establishments we have a lot of students here!

We also have a lot of pubs and nightclubs across the town - the last one shuts at 3.00 am so we are out until around 4.00am, or until activity on the streets seems to have calmed down and people are safe.

We like to provide volunteer teams of around eight or ten, in pairs or three's and, in order to keep our numbers up, we recruit twice a year. This is done in conjunction with our Town Centre Chaplain, Rod Boreham, who heads up the Guildford Town Centre Chaplaincy, the 'umbrella' organisation - Rod oversees various other important daytime ministries in the town as well as Street Angels.

One of the really positive aspects of Street Angels is how it unites like-minded Christians from all denominations, working together in this dynamic Christian ministry with the people of our town. We have become well known to the people of Guildford at night - when people see the yellow angel on our coats they seem to 'open up' to us. It is remarkable to see how Christians are able to make a real difference, by demonstrating in practical ways God's unconditional love to vulnerable people in need in Guildford.

One of our first volunteers, Caroline, age 82, proved to be one of our most popular Street Angels. So much so that she was featured with her photograph and an article about her input in Guildford by the Sunday Express in May 2012. The article talked very positively about the work of Street Angels and summed us up by saying, "*Having time for people is what Street Angels is all about*". When interviewed Caroline said at the time, "*If someone has come out to drown their sorrows and they want someone to talk to for an hour or more, then we're available to do that*". The article mentioned that "*Age is no bar to service with the Angels. In fact, if Caroline is anything to go by, it can be an advantage*". Caroline

went on to say, *“At my age, you’re seen as completely non-threatening. Young men on the verge of fighting will listen to me”*.

In response to the many compliments which members of the public give us with cries of *“We love you Street Angels”* and *“Can I have a lollipop?”* Caroline goes on to say: *“If they get to know us when things are going well, they’ll come to us if they’re in trouble later”* and Lin Haynes, our outgoing Coordinator said, *“It’s surprisingly difficult to be aggressive when you’re sucking one of these”*. She calls lollipops ‘our secret weapon’!

As we all know, Street Angels work in collaboration with door staff and in the article, one doorman mentioned, *“If some girl has lost her friends and got into trouble, we might not have time to deal with it. Being able to call in the Street Angels takes the pressure off”*.

We have built up a strong partnership with the Police, CCTV, door staff and the Emergency Services:

Sometimes, dignitaries come out with us for a ‘taster’ night out with our teams. One such high ranking Police officer was amazed at the difference in attitude when wearing Street Angels uniform rather than Police uniform. Sarah Goad, Lord Lieutenant of Surrey said:

“[We] much enjoyed it and were hugely impressed with the way it worked and the way it is obviously perceived and appreciated in the town. I lost count of the times when people greeted us with ‘Hey, Street Angels’ as though we were a welcome part of the street furniture. And occasionally, ‘Street Angels- what do you do?’ to which [Street Angels] would give a friendly reply. Good too to know that you are regarded as friends and colleagues by the Police, the door-staff, Emergency Services and no doubt others. It all had a feeling of a big family all working to keep Guildford a safe place where people can enjoy themselves on a night out.

Very impressed with the [Street Angels] team - all ages, thoughtfully (!) equipped, working happily together and with great stamina to survive a good six hours on a regular basis. I was impressed too, to find that the evening was started off with prayer - not so much, as I imagined it would be (for ourselves and our personal safety), but for the safety of all the people with whom we would come in contact. Christianity in action - good stuff..... I have no doubt you take a lot of pressure off the Police and are good for the general reputation and morale of the town.”

Lin adds *“As soon as I’m out on the streets all traces of tiredness vanish with the buzz of upbeat interaction and the opportunity to put my Christianity into action by helping those who are vulnerable (often through their over-consumption of alcohol). By the end of the night I always feel I have both been both a blessing and I have been blessed.”*

Most recently, going ‘live’ in December 2014, Street Angels have contributed towards Guildford achieving ‘Purple Flag Status’ for it’s safe reputation in the night time economy.

*

Here are some examples of people who have thanked us:

From a thankful Dad: - *“I would like to thank you and your angels for coming to the rescue of my rather worse for wear son on Saturday night in Guildford town centre. They looked after him and kept him safe until I collected him. I was deeply relieved after Gavin’s calm phone call reassured me that [my son] was in good handsI think every parent dreads a call in the night. Please pass on my sincere thanks to your team.”*

A girl we helped said: - *“I was just emailing to say that I’m extremely thankful for the street angels. They looked after me on Friday 13th and I’m truly inspired by their volunteer work. This is a great system!”*

A young man we helped said: - *“I’m just texting to let you know how much I appreciate what you’ve done, especially the fact you returned my wallet (which I had left behind). Saturday was my first experience of the Street Angels but I can assure you that you and your fellow volunteers should be immensely proud of the work you do.”*

Here's an account from one of our volunteers, on a Saturday night during May 2014.

"Ever wondered what it's like going out as a Street Angel (in Guildford)?

'A Night in Town'

9.30pm Change into uniform and gather essentials: mobile phone, reading glasses, a small amount of cash, scarf, hat, gloves – yes, it can get cold, even in May. Drive to the George Abbot car park and walk to the YMCA.

10.00 Meet the team (8 of us tonight) and prepare rucksacks, checking off items against a comprehensive list. Listen to the team leader's briefing – any situations in town we need to be aware of. Duty officer at the 'Y' sticks his head round the door to say he's already heard a request over the radio for SA assistance to a young lady at Casino night club. We pray together, we commit the night to the Lord. Then we stuff our pockets with lollipops.

10.30 All head off for the first shift, one pair going straight to Casino. My partner and I go first to the station. All is well, and town is pretty quiet as everyone makes their way cheerfully to their first venue of the night. After checking the top of town and finding all is closed down at G-live, my partner and I wend our way past the 5 pubs in Sydenham Road, and exchange pleasantries with the door staff at the Legion (another night club). Crossing the Shalford Road we decide to check out the river for revellers making the most of the balmy, late-spring evening.

To the side of the riverside theatre we find B, a young lady sitting alone, clutching her phone. Approaching, we ask if she's ok. Her eyes fill with tears and, contrary to appearances; she says yes, she's fine. Pressing her for more, I ask if she's sure. Her face crumples and she insists she's perfectly ok and doesn't need help. I gently disagree, saying I can see she's upset, and would like to know what's wrong. She begins to cry, and responds "Do you? Do you really want to know? Really?"

"Yes" I answer, sitting down beside her "I really want to know". "Ok" she says through her tears "On Monday my boyfriend hanged himself from a tree outside our house. Today is my 25th birthday. I've come into town with my friends and they have all left me."

I am shocked and cannot find words of comfort in the face of such pain. I ask if I can give her a hug and she folds into my arms, sobbing deeply. After a few minutes she regains her composure and tells us more: she has a 5 year old daughter, currently in the care of her parents to give her a night out, and an ex-boyfriend serving 4 years in prison for domestic abuse. Her phone rings and she passes it to me to answer. A friend is responding to an earlier text and when he hears of her distress he asks us to stay with her until he comes. She too, is now desperate for our company. The friend arrives 10 minutes later and after giving us many hugs she gets into his car. I tell her we'll pray for her.

12.30 Time for a hot drink and a break at the Y.

1.15 Back out, my partner and I take another little-used route. To the side of the Electric Theatre we find a girl on the floor, slumped against a wall. Another equally scantily-clad girl stands nearby, phone in hand. As we approach she returns our greeting with relief, and says she doesn't know what to do. Her friend J has had too much to drink, and apart from periodically throwing up, has been unresponsive for over an hour. I touch J's shoulder to try to wake her, and find her icy-cold. We wrap a foil blanket round her and I huddle close, rubbing her back to try to warm her up. Her wonderful friend, F, has stood barefoot, watching over her for an hour, trying to wake her and find someone to pick them up. We spend the next 30 minutes gradually getting J conscious, giving her sips of water and supporting her as she vomits. For a long time she is too ill and too ashamed to even contemplate standing up, but eventually we coax her to her feet. A pair of flip flops replaces her heels, and together we head for the taxi rank. She now recovers well, and finally shame gives way to amusement at being wrapped in foil, and gratitude for the warmth it brings. There is a long queue for taxis, and now cheery and reasonably steady, J and F set off for home on foot.

2.30. We are now very late for our break, but return to the Y for a quick drink before heading back out for the last shift. This passes quickly with a number of brief encounters and the usual gratitude and appreciation for our presence. A longer conversation with D proves interesting – he is a professional rugby player, a member of the Harlequin team. You meet all sorts out on the streets, and not everyone is completely drunk!

3.30 and as we decide to leave the hot spot outside Subway in Bedford Road and head for our meeting with the rest of the team at the taxi rank, a fight breaks out between two groups. Insults and heated words are exchanged but just as we are about to call for help on the radio the groups separate and the tension eases.

Simultaneously, about a dozen beefy door staff, (who usually congregate outside a nearby night club at closing time), come thundering round the corner, summoned by an alert member of staff working in a back office. They spread out amongst the youngsters and encourage them to go home. We too leave, heading for the taxi rank.

3.50 The last stragglers waiting for a cab have a couple of Policemen keeping an eye on them and so we return to the Y. We pack away our gear, de-brief, and spend a few minutes praying for the key incidents we've been involved in and thank God for his protection and presence. Then it's back to the car, and home.

4.30 I make a bowl of porridge and retreat to the cool of garden, mulling over the last few hours. A blackbird sings from the roof of the house, and I drink in the peace and beauty of the new day dawning. B stays in my mind and I commit her again to the One who can give her the comfort and help she so desperately needs as I head indoors and to bed. With my mind buzzing, sleep comes slowly, but I feel privileged to have been able to spend the night in town, looking out for those God cares so deeply about”.

Peter Lillystone (co-ordinator Hillingdon Street Angels) writes:

Three and a half years ago when we started Hillingdon Street Angels, we purchased black and silver coats with Street Angels embroidered in large orange letters on the backs. We never thought that our Street Angels would be taken for traffic wardens! After a few too many drinks, some of the folks coming out of the pubs see us on the street and ask "Are you going to give me a ticket?" The fact that the traffic wardens finish at 6.00pm is irrelevant in this situation.

Once we explain who we are, their attitude changes, "*Oh, we love you street angels, can I have a lollipop?*" The lollipops are used to provide a sugar boost and to divert people away from an argument or possible fight. It's difficult to carry on an argument while sucking a lollipop!

Sometimes it's the small acts of kindness that have the biggest impact.

Even after three and a half years on the streets of Hillingdon, we come across people who have never seen us on a Friday or Saturday. They always ask the same questions:

Where are you from? Why do you do this? How much do you get paid?

They are amazed to discover that we are volunteers seeking to help them enjoy a Friday or Saturday night out in safety. They find our answers unbelievable and they are so appreciative of our volunteer service. In a world which loves to point the finger and criticise, it is a welcome pleasure to receive so much affirmation from the people we seek to serve. If I had a £1 for every time I have heard someone say "*Oh we love you street angels*", I would be a rich man!

That's not to say that being a Street Angel is easy, far from it! It's not easy watching people waste their lives by the poor decisions they have made. It's not easy trying to help someone who refuses help of any kind.

On the whole, people are willing to receive help and in fact many seek help from our Street Angels. Whether it's help finding the taxi rank or information about the late night bus services. After three and a half years on the streets I have yet to come to the end of an evening's shift and wish I hadn't been out with the Hillingdon Street Angels.

Huddersfield Street Angels

Dianne Hughes (co-ordinator Huddersfield Street Angels) writes:

Street Angels started in Huddersfield in March of 2007, so we have been going out for six years. We now have about thirty five volunteers on our books, but sadly some are no longer able to go out with us. We do have a fairly good reliable twenty people who turn out monthly. However we are aware that those no longer able to go out, do pray for our welfare. It has been an interesting six years with many ups and downs, but mainly ups, I am pleased to say.

At our recent AGM in May, Ian Atkinson was re-elected to once again be our Chairman. Ian and Karen, his wife, go out regularly.

We continue to go out on Saturday nights, having given up with Fridays as the town is not very busy. We did have a period of doing Wednesday nights, notoriously 'Student Night', and are open to doing Wednesday's again in the summer months, depending on demand.

In 2013 we were asked to provide some Stewards for 'Huddersfield Churches Together Pentecost Praise', in May. This we were able to do; and despite the very wet day, the atmosphere was excellent in the town.

We have also been asked to provide some Stewards for the 'Kirkwood Hospice Midnight Memory Walk' which is held in June. Again this is something that some of us will get involved in.

In February we took the Mayor of Kirklees out one very cold Saturday night. He thoroughly enjoyed the evening, taking great pleasure from the informality and the chatting to people on the streets, enjoying their evening out. He subsequently invited two representatives to a 'Thank You Volunteer Evening' in the Huddersfield Town Hall, which was very enjoyable.

We also invited the Bishop of Pontefract and Patron of Street Angels – CNI Network out for a night – Right Revered Tony Robinson and he had a good evening seeing how we are progressing. He went out with us in the very early days when we were in our infancy. On this night, we also had a new video filmed which shows our Street Angels in action on the streets of Huddersfield.

We also hope to take out the Chairman of the West Yorkshire Methodist District later in the year. Taking out visitor's means that we get better known in our local communities, though I do think we are becoming quite well known nowadays.

In 2011 we were present at the 'Huddersfield Examiner Community Awards Ceremony', at what is now the John Smith Stadium, when we were awarded a Certificate in our Section. It was a very sparkling evening with many happy memories.

Last year we were very proud to be presented with the 'West Yorkshire Divisional Commanders Award', at a very prestigious ceremony in the Police Headquarters in Wakefield.

Whilst we do not do this work for what we get; it is very rewarding when we do gain recognition for what we do.

Street Angels and similar groups continue to be a well respected group of people nationwide I believe, and a very welcome presence on our streets in Towns and Cities in our Country. Long may we continue!

Keighley Shared Church - NightShift

Cherry Connolly (founder of Keighley NightShift) writes:

The Church Green area of Keighley is always crowded on Saturday nights because of all the pubs and clubs in the area. It isn't the same story on Sunday morning when Keighley Shared Church is open for worship! We realised that if we really wanted to welcome people into church, it might help to change our opening hours! We heard about an initiative at Hereford Baptist Church called Nightshift where they opened the church late on Saturday night to provide hospitality to people out in the pubs and clubs, and we decided to have a go! We didn't have enough people from our own congregation who could staff the project, which actually was a blessing, as we had to ask for help from other churches. This made it an ecumenical venture has been a source of strength and increased fellowship between churches. We started in 2006 and it is still running 6 years later.

The Church is open from 10 pm on Saturday until 1 am on Sunday, and we simply offer conversation, free tea, coffee, biscuits and use of the toilet at the back of church,. We give the opportunity for people to look around the church and have a time of prayer for those that want it. One of our early regulars was Derek who enjoys looking round the church; he has a real affection for holy places and likes the peace that comes upon him in church. John, one of the Nightshift leaders told him that it was God that pulled people into churches not the building! This led to a discussion about how we "should" and "shouldn't" meet with God. John was saddened to hear some of the worries Derek had about coming before God with his problems, taking communion and other issues that had been used to keep him away from restored faith. They prayed together and Derek was able to put his faith and spirit at peace with God, reaffirming a lost commitment.

Some of the things people have said about Nightshift at Keighley Shared Church:

I love this place, you can come in, share your views and hear what other people think too, and without getting judged for being different. – Someone we helped

Sometimes it is the most unlikely looking people who are interested in what we are doing. Recently a group of 3 men stopped to ask what we were doing, and ten minutes later one came back and insisted on donating a fiver to the church. He said he felt just by being available we were doing a really good thing, and although he didn't feel a need for help it was good that we were there if anybody did. – A Volunteer

It sounds a bit grim, turning out late on Saturday night, standing outdoors, not getting home until the early morning, but doing Nightshift has been a great blessing all round. – A Volunteer

Leeds Festival Angels

Rev. Andy Nicholson (co-ordinator Leeds Festival Angels) writes:

In late 2010 Kate Dickenson, an octogenarian Methodist lady, approached the 'Thorner Churches Together' committee with the idea of Thorner churches running a prayer tent at the 'Leeds Festival'. Thorner is the nearest village to the Festival site and we have good relations with Festival Republic and Melvin Benn, its chairman.

The committee thought it was a good idea along the lines of 'wouldn't it be a fantastic idea if ...' and left it at that. Kate went off and approached 'Festival Republic', who were very positive about the idea and offered us a site, water and electricity free of charge with the suggestion that we might sell teas and coffees.

That first year, 2011, the Prayer Tent ran from Friday to Sunday and from 10am to 4pm with about twelve volunteers from local churches. Kate felt she didn't want to continue with the project in 2012, so Andy Nicholson took over running the Prayer Tent. Seeing the opportunity to expand the ministry he invited Nic Sheppard, the diocesan Youthwork advisor, Beth Tash, the Leeds Street Angels leader, and Graeme Dutton, a local Methodist Minister, to make up the Steering Group. The name was changed from Prayer Tent to Festival Angels to reflect the links with the Street and Club Angels work that was going on in the City. The opening hours were expanded to 24-hours a day from Friday lunchtime to Monday morning.

In the first year prayer was offered on an informal, person-by-person basis. In 2012 we set up string across the tent and invited people to write down their prayers and pin them to the string. This became an opening for further discussion and listening/witnessing. We promised to pray for all prayers that were written down. Many of which spoke of loss and sadness, bereavement and a deep spiritual hunger.

The work went very well, with one volunteer, Mark Tiddy, later blogging;

"As I sit here Monday afternoon recovering from my lack of sleep over the weekend I'm blown away by how a prayer tent in the midst of a festival somehow created the most authentic 'church' I have ever experienced."

One of the lessons learnt in 2012 is that we should be at the Festival from Wednesday, which is when the early bird ticket-holders arrive. We recognised that

this would mean extra volunteers, but felt that with advertising through diocesan and Methodist church channels we could reach more perspective volunteers.

During early 2013 'Festival Republic' approached Andy with two prospective ventures that Festival Angels could be involved in. Firstly the opportunity arose to run the Lost Property Tent. The previous group had been rather lax in their record keeping and 'Festival Republic' wanted a group they could trust to run the tent efficiently and professionally. For some reason they approached Festival Angels. At first we were a little uncertain about this project as it diverged from our primary purpose of sharing the love of Christ through listening and caring for the Festival-goers. However, we felt that through doing a good job in the Lost Property Tent other doors would open that were closer to our objectives. Later that month, after agreeing to take on the Lost Property Tent, Andy was approached for Festival Angels to run a detached Pastoral team that would patrol the site during daylight hours and assist festival-goers when in need.

This was a project much closer to the heart of Festival Angels core objectives and indeed linked nicely with the Street and Club Angels work that Beth Tash was already involved in.

With now three areas of involvement running concurrently, two of which run 24/7, there was a need for many more volunteers. Fortunately volunteers continue to approach the leaders and in 2013 there were nearly one hundred volunteers working for Festival Angels during which the teams, and festival-goers, endured torrential downpours and mud which resulted in us providing dry sleeping bags and for some a dry place to sleep as tents were submerged under water. Thankfully the 2014 Festival was drier (but colder) with one hundred and twenty volunteers providing a prayer cafe, detached teams and lost property.

Quite what the future has in store for Festival Angels it is difficult to know. We could never have thought when the local Prayer Tent first started in 2011 that in such a few years it would have grown to such proportions, so God only knows (thankfully) what He has in store for us in the years to come.

Leeds Street Angels

Beth Tash (former co-ordinator Leeds Street Angels and Leeds Club Angels) writes:

Our Leeds project just seemed to start! I visited Halifax, was really encouraged and helped by Paul Blakey and Sara Barrie of Headingley Street Angels - and then it was the first night! I think we all felt nervous, we didn't really know each other but had just answered a poster's plea for volunteers - and here we were!

Now we're a year into the project! One of the amazing things about the project is that you become friends with other volunteers, probably people that you wouldn't cross paths with otherwise. This also goes for the relationships you build with other agencies across the city. It all feels like an adventure - I've lived in Leeds for ten years, but have never met these people, and seen the nightlife of the city from their point of view.

As a Christian this has been such a wake-up call! There's a huge night-time economy that I just knew nothing about, so many people, jobs, issues and needs - and pretty much every church congregation is asleep when this part of the city is buzzing most. It's made me feel part of the city more than ever, and responsible for this city too. There are so many ways in which as a Christian project we've been welcomed with open arms, as we bring practical help, friendly faces and seek to love each person we meet in whatever way we can.

It's challenging work, it can be tiring the next day when you've got to bed at 4am, but it's also extremely fulfilling, especially as you can often immediately see the impact that the project makes.

A few stories that stand out for me:

Assisting a male British Transport Police officer with a very distressed older female at Leeds Station. She'd had a series of significant losses in her life, and was near the end of wanting to live. I was able to help the officer to get her details and sort practical help, but more than that I was able to put my arm around her and let her know that for that evening, she was not alone.

Having fun with the door staff over Christmas and New Year; these guys do such a good job that is pretty much never appreciated. They do a lot to keep our streets safe, often have to endure much verbal abuse, and many of them have the patience of Saints. It's been really fun building friendships with them.

Seeing team members respond to an aggressive situation between a couple. They handled it with calm, firm, respectful attitudes and due to their response, both the male and female remained safe and unhurt.

Sitting next to a young female who had lost friends, coat, shoes, on the steps of Leeds Town Hall. She started pouring out her hurt at a recent situation in her life. I got to tell her that there is a God, and a God who loves her, who is with her, and who is the best friend anyone could ever have. We chatted for a long time, and eventually got her a taxi, so she could get home safely. Most of the time we don't get to know what happens next, but we trust every person we come across to God.

*

The project is now able to cover one Saturday per month as well as every Friday and has a new coordinator, Katie Waters.

Macclesfield Street Angels

Pip Moscrop (co-ordinator HOPE Street Angels Macclesfield) writes:

Street Angels in Macclesfield is an initiative of 'Hope in North East Cheshire', thirty-nine Churches working together in mission. After some months of preparation, Street Angels were out on the streets of Macclesfield's town centre for the first time on Friday 15th June 2012. A year on, we look back with joy, and no little relief, that it has all gone so well!

We have been delighted that Street Angels out late in the small area of the town, which is home to the late-night clubs and pubs have been universally well-received by the clubs, the Police, the CCTV Operations, and especially by those out on the town having a good time. We are now well-recognised, and much appreciated, by both young and not-so-young revellers. It is heartening to be asked by a doorman or a Police Officer to come to the aid of a person in need of help.

Our volunteer Street Angels come from some eight different Churches; of course, we would like an even wider spread. Many of them are grandparents and are treated with much respect and warmth by those out on the town. We are blessed in having so many dedicated volunteers currently sufficient to cover every Saturday evening. We would like to be on the streets for at least two evenings each week and are now asked by the Police to cover additional evenings around holiday times.

We are currently on duty every Saturday evening from 10.30pm to about 3.00am. Our Street Angels work in pairs, whether on the streets or at the base in the United Reformed Church in Park Green, just round the corner from the club area of the Town, where we are able to offer refreshments to all those who need them. We are in constant contact both by radio and on the street cameras with the CCTV Operations Centre in Macclesfield Town Hall at the other end of the Town. Volunteers have found this degree of surveillance comforting; it has also made it possible for us to alert the Police to significant incidents.

Our shift reports reflect the variety of occasions when we have been able to help reduce tension and support individuals who are in need:

"A young man rather distressed wanting to contact his friend. We asked if he had mobile. As he did not have one with him, we allowed him to speak into ours. After

this he seemed calmer and happier, told us of his various problems and walked off happier”

“A lady on her own was outside No4 Park Green. I sat with her for a while and spoke to her husband on her phone for her, because she was too drunk to let him know where she was. He came to collect her and was very appreciative of our help!”

“A doorman called us over to help a young woman who couldn’t stand up due to excess alcohol. She had lost her ‘friends’. We found her name and address from her driving licence and offered to get her a taxi home. Not wanting help, she set off down Mill Street. We followed and stayed with her until her ‘friends’ arrived. They seemed capable and concerned and escorted her away.”

And an email from someone we helped:

“Hi! I'd just like to say... U are angels! I was out in Macclesfield on Saturday night and was in agony by the end of the night in my heels when an angel kindly gave me a pair of flip flops! U can't begin to imagine how grateful I was! I still can't believe that there are street angels & volunteers that want to help silly drunken people like us!! I'm convinced God led you to me Saturday night with those flip flops . . . again I just wanted to thank those angels from the weekend!!”

We hope that we are making some impact on crime and antisocial behaviour in our Town; certainly the Police indicate we are helping by providing a calming and concerned presence on the streets late at night.

We are very grateful to be part of the Christian Nightlife Initiatives (CNI) network which was launched in July 2008 to help support, resource and promote all that local street patrol projects like ours are doing. Paul Blakey, CNI's head, has given us invaluable advice. It has also been very helpful to have access to policies and procedures which we have successfully customised for our specific needs in our Volunteers' Handbook. A great strength of the Street Angels and Christian Nightlife Initiatives network is that we have much freedom to work as we wish, in meeting the specific local needs of our town while having the support and guidance of such a respected national organisation.

In the week before Christmas 2012, we were delighted to be visited by our MP, David Rutley, and Paul and Jean Blakey on the same evening! They did stints on our streets each with one of our volunteer Street Angels. After his visit, David commented:

“It is reassuring to know that Street Angels are volunteering to help people enjoy their evenings out in Macclesfield and working to make our Town Centre a safer place at weekends”.

As a result of his continuing dialogue with Paul Blakey, David Rutley raised the subject of the work of Street Angels in Topical Questions in the House of Commons on 20th March:

David Rutley (MP for Macclesfield):

“Can my right honorable friend confirm that the big society awards help highlight the important work of community groups, just as the 2012 award did for the Street Angels initiative, which helps make night life safer in Macclesfield and in hundreds of towns and cities across the country?”

Nick Hurd (Parliamentary Secretary (Civil Society), Cabinet Office; Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner):

“I can certainly confirm that the big society awards are there to throw a spotlight on and celebrate outstanding community-led initiatives, such as the Street Angels initiative that has done such good work in Macclesfield and has now spread to more than 70 towns across the UK. I encourage colleagues on both sides of the House to think about nominating community initiatives to the big society awards through the No. 10 website.”

We are delighted that all our Street Angels find the experience of staying up late both rewarding and usually fun (Macclesfield is renowned for its bad weather!). There are lots of opportunities to speak to people, some very needy, with whom we would normally have no contact. Like Angels in the Bible, Angels on our streets are messengers of God. We promote the message not by words but by just being there, showing love and caring, through our practical help!

Oldham Street Angels

Revd. Jean Hurlston (co-ordinator Oldham Street Angels) writes:

Oldham Street Angels have been operating since 26th November 2011 on Saturday nights from 11pm till 3am. The project started as an initiative by Jean Hurlston who had already helped establish Bolton Street Angels when she worked there as the 'Town Centre Chaplain'. When Jean moved to Oldham Parish Church as associate priest (NSM), the church's council supported her idea to set up a similar project there. She joined 'Oldham's Town Centre's Chaplaincy Committee' who agreed to manage the Street Angels project. Next port of call was to enlist the support of the police, *"That was very easy", says Jean, "the town centre inspector was keen from that first conversation and arranged a meeting with key players from within the night time economy."* Following that group meeting, plans were made to have a six week pilot scheme, operating over the Christmas/New Year period in 2011/12.

After the pilot, the decision was taken to go ahead and run Oldham Street Angels as a regular feature of the town's night life. The town centre sergeant visits regularly at the start of each shift to give a briefing and keep the volunteers up to date with policing strategy. Street Angels are members of the town's 'Pub Watch Committee' and various other business and community groups. They now have large numbers of followers on their Twitter and Facebook accounts.

Locating premises rent free was a huge bonus, since it placed Oldham Street Angels firmly on the map, situated on the main street mid-way between the two major taxi ranks. From there, they have built up a strong reassuring presence on the streets and are now in discussion with the council's re-generation planners about identifying alternative premises which are even more central and appropriately designed to assist people's rest and recovery.

Volunteers came originally from the parish church itself; however people have since come forward to help from other town centre churches and indeed people who have no faith background, but who nevertheless have a genuine heart to help their town and its visitors. Oldham Street Angels occasionally cover Friday and Sunday nights over Bank Holiday weekends and in the Christmas season, however they are regularly out there every Saturday.

There are currently fourteen Street Angels on the team who work on a rota basis ably managed by Jen Gibbons. The project is still supported by the parish church which oversees safe guarding / disclosures and financial accounts. Training in areas like communications, conflict resolution, drug and alcohol awareness are mandatory and all volunteers are encouraged to participate in recruitment events, publicity and other meetings.

What has been the key to the project's success? Jen says, *"Every week there is someone whom we assist - we really do feel we make a positive difference to the life of the town."*

Jean also has a theory - *"I've worked in the voluntary sector all my life and my motto has always been 'do yourself out of your job! In other words, always train others to do what you do, that way others develop and grow and you don't regard yourself as being indispensable. The team has grown in discipleship and in the practical, yet humbling way they respond to people's needs. Our Street Angels are truly amazing individuals who bring love, peace and joy to Oldham's town centre."*

*

In October 2014 the Oldham team welcomed a special visitor, the Archbishop of York Dr John Sentamu.

As well as seeing the existing base for the Street Angels and a potential new base the Archbishop went on a patrol of the town and surprised the locals by visiting a pub and nightclub. At Up Steps Inn he chatted to patrons before serving a customer a pint of Bishop's Finger ale whilst at Liquid Envy the Archbishop met licensees, town centre police and staff.

Dr Sentamu said of the Angels, *"I think anybody who goes out to help people must be congratulated. They've been going for three years, which is wonderful. They rescue people from difficult situations."*

Scarborough Street Angels

Brian Ward (co-ordinator Scarborough Street Angels) writes:

April 2008 the police and council approached the church to see if we could help in some way with the trouble they were seeing on the streets on a Friday and Saturday night. There were already two schemes running in the UK at the time, one called Street Pastors which, over many years is now operating in around 200 cities and towns throughout Britain, and Street Angels which is more native to Yorkshire, but spreading further a field and had been running for just over three years. Both schemes have the same aim of demonstrating the practical love of Jesus Christ on the streets, and is voluntary based. The only difference is that with Street Angels the volunteers are not just from the church, but are open to the members of the public as long as they are sympathetic to the Christian faith.

Pastor Paul Abell, the church leader for Kingdom Faith Church Yorkshire here in Scarborough, was in conversation at the time with the Police and 'Safer Communities for Scarborough'. He was able to tell them of my involvement in Street Pastors in Perth, Scotland, and that my family and I were moving down to Scarborough in August - September 2008. Whilst we were down looking for houses earlier in the year, Paul and I were able to meet up with the Council and the Police to discuss the way forward with Street Angels for Scarborough.

After I moved to Scarborough in September, I was still looking for work, which finally came about in the December. This gave great opportunity to get Street Angels up and running. After several more meetings with the council and Police they asked if the Church would take on the responsibility and for myself to co-ordinate Street Angels Scarborough; this we decided to do. All we needed now were the volunteers. We had meetings with most of the church leaders from all denominations who were supportive of the scheme and Paul was able to send out letters for those who were interested in becoming volunteer Street Angels.

The criteria for becoming a Street Angel in Scarborough is that you are eighteen years or older with two character references, a CRB check, you belong to a church or are sympathetic to the Christian faith, and are willing to complete twelve training nights. In our initial recruitment drive we ended up with twenty six volunteers (currently the scheme has fifty volunteers) - of which two were from 'Kingdom Faith Church' and the rest from other churches within Scarborough. The twelve week training began in the November 2008.

The training consisted of many agencies that gave up their time freely. It started with 'Safer Communities' giving their responsibilities and support for Street Angels as well as the responsibilities and roles of a Street Angel from the churches perspective and how we were going to demonstrate the practical love of Jesus Christ on the streets i.e. to love your neighbour. Other agencies included the police on how to recognise signs of trouble, communication, and conflict resolution; the 'Cambridge Centre' informed us on drug, alcohol, and solvent abuse, and more about the work they do. The NSPCC offered counselling and listening skills and first aid basic life support. The 'Rainbow Centre' spoke on homeless and housing support; and finally 'Signpost' looking at domestic abuse services. All these agencies are working and helping those in Scarborough. We also covered 'Pubwatch', Licensing laws, child and adult protection, CCTV and radio skills. The training was valuable. Not only did we learn new skills, but we got to know one another and had a great time, and we thank all the agencies that were involved.

At the end of the twelve week training programme we had a commissioning service which was held at Kingdom Faith Church on the 8th February 2009 and was followed by a Civic Reception on Tuesday the 10th February 2009 hosted by Scarborough Council to officially launch Street Angels Scarborough. At the Civic Reception, honoured guests included the Mayor and Consort, Chief Constable of North Yorkshire Police and the head of the Council. The Street Angel volunteers and the church were thanked publicly for being involved, for working alongside the Police, 'Safer Communities' and other agencies that want to see the town become a safer place.

Our first night on the streets was Saturday 14th February 2009. We have a set route which keeps us within CCTV coverage and we are in radio contact with CCTV, which takes us round most of the pubs and clubs within Scarborough town centre. We patrol in teams of three to five between 10pm and 2:30am. We come alongside the vulnerable, not just those who are drunk, but also those who are on their own, are lost or just need somebody to talk to. The Street Angels give out first aid to those who have cut their hands or feet and need a plaster, or give out flip-flops to the ladies who come out of the night clubs without their high heel shoes on. This prevents cut feet on the way home. We give out bottles of water to those who may need hydrating after too much alcohol and are able to help those with communication difficulties to get a taxi home safely. Street Angels are there if people want us to pray with them or a hanky for those who are tearful.

Skipton Street Angels

Gordon Williamson (on behalf of the co-ordinating group Skipton Street Angels) writes:

'Churches Together in Skipton and District' appointed a task group in October 2008 to undertake preliminary work aiming to set up a Street Angels scheme in Skipton. Consultations with North Yorkshire Police, Craven District Council and local businesses and charities generated a very supportive response. Members of the task group liaised with Street Angels Halifax and Street Angels Bradford and went out on some of their patrols.

An open meeting was held in Skipton on 24th November 2008, for anyone who wanted to know more about the scheme. The meeting was well attended and included representatives of those already consulted plus the founder of Street Angels Halifax, along with some of their volunteers. Information was presented to the meeting, so that those who were interested in supporting or becoming Street Angels in Skipton could make informed decisions.

There was a positive response from the meeting and a decision made to move forward. This generated a considerable amount of work for the task group planning and networking to make sure everything was in place before the scheme started in Skipton. This included searching for a suitable base, raising finance, sourcing and obtaining all the necessary equipment, the recruiting, vetting and training of volunteers and making sure all Skipton pubs, other businesses and all those potentially affected were aware of and in agreement with the undertaking. Many individuals, local officials, businesses, churches and charities generously gave of their time and money to enable this work, to quickly move forward with full co-operation.

A Service of Commissioning was held on Sunday 22nd March 2009 at Holy Trinity Church, Skipton and attended by a large congregation including local church leaders, members of the task group and Local Councillors. Twenty two Street Angels were commissioned and welcomed by local clergy, the Mayor of Skipton and the Chairman of Craven District Council. A Service of Thanksgiving and Commissioning is held annually for new and existing Street Angels.

Street Angels Skipton started on Saturday 4th April 2009 and in May 2009 the task group became a standing committee. In September 2011 Street Angels Skipton chose to be part of the Christian Nightlife Initiatives Network.

Street Angels Skipton received the Community Group of the Year Award 2012 from Craven Community Champions for making an outstanding contribution to the community. In 2013 The High Sheriff of North Yorkshire presented a Commendation Award, recognising great and valuable services to the community.

Stockton Town Pastors

Steve Brock (co-ordinator Stockton Town Pastors) writes:

Stockton Town Pastors (STP) have been providing a caring presence in Stockton town centre each Friday and Saturday evening for almost five years, and will be celebrating their birthday on 4th December 2014.

Motivated by our compassion for others and our Christian faith, its 55 volunteers represent 20 churches in the Stockton area across a range of denominations. They comprise a wide mix of ages and social and professional backgrounds including medical consultants, students, unemployed and those who are retired. Our numbers are not restricted to those from the Christian community, and all who are in agreement with our ethos and undergo training are welcome to join us.

Volunteers give up one evening a month – some make larger commitments – to patrol the town centre area in teams of three between the hours of 10pm and 3am. Our aims include making a contribution towards the safety of others during the night-time environment, helping those who find themselves marginalised and vulnerable, and offering relevant practical and spiritual help to those in need.

Our volunteers have devoted more than 16,000 staff-hours to patrols or providing a free café from our mobile unit, which is parked on Stockton High Street each weekend. This does not include the many hours spent in training, from first aid to conflict management – not forgetting of course our policy and procedures handbook. Some of our volunteers have also chosen to pursue a recognised Open College Network (OCN) qualification “Supporting Users of the Night-time Economy,” which has been specifically developed to recognise the work done through STP and is the first national qualification of its kind.

The links we have made with our partners the Police, Stockton Borough Council and ‘Renaissance’ the local strategic partnership board have been vital in many ways, including training provided by police officers and first aid courses secured through Tees Achieve via ‘Neighbourhood Learning and Deprived Communities’ (NLDC) project funding. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks to an enhanced level are carried out at minimal cost via the Stockton Residents & Community Groups Association (SRCGA) and our personal radios are provided by the Council, connecting us to the CCTV Security Centre.

On a practical level, we have built up friendship and understanding with others who also work in the night-time economy – taxi drivers, food outlet owners, registered door supervisors etc., and we are invited to regular ‘Pubwatch’ meetings. We also have representation on Stockton’s ‘Independent Advisory Group’ and ‘Catalyst – Voice Forum’ groups, and are working with a Christian based ‘Love Stockton’ group, whose vision is to see the transformation of Stockton through developing unity, collaborative working & coordinated communication within the local Christian community for the benefit of Stockton and its residents.

An independent evaluation carried out by Teesside University, published in September 2011, said: *“In summary, the findings have shown that “Stockton Town Pastors have been extremely well received by Stockton’s various night time economy service providers and their respective clientele, with the majority of respondents not only expressing incredible admiration and appreciation for the volunteers, but also articulating considerably in-depth knowledge regarding the many services provided by the volunteers of Stockton Town Pastors”.* It also revealed that *“.....representatives from both Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council and Cleveland Police articulate that the Stockton Town Pastors have indeed contributed to Stockton’s reduction in crime, and are considered to be an integral part of their overall crime and disorder reduction strategy. The Police and Stockton Borough Council are so pleased with the report that they are considering using it at a national level to demonstrate the advantages that are to be gained from engaging with local community groups in reducing crime and the fear of crime.”*

So exactly how do our volunteers help? Well, in the last five years we have administered first aid on at least 420 occasions – anything ranging from a minor cuts and bruises to cases of serious drunkenness, many of which might otherwise have resulted in visits to the hospital. Out of these, the situation was so serious that we had to call for an ambulance on 88 occasions.

We have reconciled those in need with their friends and family, placed many in taxis so they can get home safely, and handed out countless bottles of water to those who have drunk too much alcohol. We are also well known for handing out flip-flops to ladies who have given up on their high heels and in consequence are faced with a walk through dirty, vomit and urine-drenched pavements (the Council’s environmental services do a tremendous job each morning cleaning the streets, so shoppers aren’t confronted with this). Whilst on patrols we have also

picked or swept up more than 8,500 items of potential harm, such as bottles and broken glass.

A supply of lollipops also helps to keep things calm and good-natured when things look like they might boil over, and are good conversation starters.

However, most of our time is spent simply talking with people – including the many who want to thank us for the work that we do and the inspiration we provide to encourage others to become involved in voluntary work. Our desire to demonstrate what we believe to be Jesus' love for others in a practical way, regardless of circumstance and without judgement, and our ability to offer a listening ear, is greatly appreciated and, despite working in what can sometimes be a demanding alcohol-fuelled environment; we have never felt anything but gratitude from those we encounter.

Volunteers appreciate that all we can ever do is offer immediate and short term help in a crisis, but we have built up relationships with many other excellent local public services and voluntary groups, such as 'Lifeline' 'Housing Options' and the 'A Way Out' charity for at-risk women and youths, to which we are able to refer individuals where appropriate. We provide leaflets containing details of a range of local health and support services, and have developed excellent working relationships with 'The Bridge' and 'Turnaround Homes' hostels, who have usually been able to find temporary accommodation for those we come across who are homeless.

STP became a registered charity in 2011 and in October 2013 we held a thanksgiving service at Stockton Baptist Tabernacle with many volunteers and supporters attending, including the Mayor of Stockton Lynne Apedaile and Stockton South MP James Wharton, both of whom gave ringing endorsements of the what had been achieved so far.

STP is a member of the Street Angels – Christian Nightlife Initiatives (CNI) network, which supports 120 similar projects throughout the UK. In 2012 it received a 'Big Society' award from Downing Street and CNI founder and CEO Paul Blakey MBE together with STP project manager Steve Brock (CNI trustee) took their wives along to Number 10 to receive the award personally from the Prime Minister David Cameron. After the visit, Steve Brock said: *"The Church has been doing big society work - taking the initiative to reach out and help others - for more than 2,000 years, and CNI projects up and down the country are just examples of how we are helping those in need without judgement and regardless*

of circumstance. It was a privilege to attend Downing Street and have our work acknowledged, and is a memory that will live on for the rest of my days. The hundreds of volunteers who carry out this work are absolutely brilliant, show a true Christian heart and fully deserve the recognition this award brings.” Interestingly, during his address to the Big Society award winners, the Prime Minister quoted Mahatma Ghandi: *“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”*

However, the truest testament to our success comes from the thanks we receive from those we have helped, samples of which are:

”I spoke to some of your volunteers tonight!! One of them was Sue and what a lovely lady she was..... Please just let Sue know that I think she is a wonderful lady :-)”

“Thank you for helping XXXX last night. She is fine now, but we are so glad of your help”

“I have just watched you help that girl to her feet and send her off with her friend. I had to come across and say well done, you are really appreciated. God bless you all”

“I would just like to say thank you very much—whoever you are—you helped me get in a taxi last night in Stockton High Street. Wow, I was in a bad state and I’d just like to say thank you very VERY much. Good service. Thank you.”

A story from Stockton Town Pastors:

Emma (name changed for confidentiality purposes) was going out drinking a lot without any money and so getting other people to buy her drinks. She was going out alone and so was incredibly vulnerable and spending a lot of time with strangers that she met when drunk. She says that she didn't know what she was doing on nights out, and can't remember a lot of it. One night, the Stockton Town Pastors found her in town in a bad way and looked after her. They then referred her to A Way Out for support. She explained that her partner was in jail and so she had been drinking and taking drugs to numb the pain and forget. She also had no stable place to live and so was referred into Rocsolid housing support.

Emma's drug and alcohol use can reach dangerous levels; however she is now working with CRI to reduce this, and has managed to cut back dramatically. A Way Out, Rocsolid and CRI are all working together closely to support Emma, and have recently aided her in enrolling at college to study beauty therapy. She has also applied for Heart 2 Change; an intensive recovery programme at A Way Out designed to help clients develop life skills whilst dealing with emotional issues. Emma is making positive steps to improve her quality of life and is engaging well with the relevant services. She would like to thank the Stockton Town Pastors for helping her and putting her in touch with A Way Out.

Tenerife – The Living Room

Rachel Scott (co-ordinator The Living Room Tenerife) writes:

“Tenerife!!!!?” The thought is written all over this lady's face as I tell her about the work I do at ‘The Living Room’. I laugh to myself, I am used to this reaction, as this lady, along with so many others before her, are surprised to hear of Tenerife as a place for mission.

Tenerife, more specifically, the nightlife resort of Las Americas, is the place where hundreds of British adults aged between 18 and 30 years old, arrive each year to live and work, seeking adventure and a party lifestyle. They arrive with huge expectations, but inevitably end up wrapped up in drugs, alcohol, sex and end up in very messy situations.

It is true that this is not your typical place for mission, however Las Americas has been on God's heart for a long time.

Over twenty years ago, a Swedish couple began to prayer-walk up and down the nightlife strip and over fifteen years ago a young Christian girl, fondly known as “Scottish Carol”, used to visit the strip to chat and pray with the young people. Various other young Christians over the years have moved here to work, in an attempt to witness to their peers and by 2003, they were regularly visiting the nightlife strip to befriend the people they met. Jesus was beginning to move and people were getting saved, however with no place to follow up what He was doing, the work was limited. Around this time God had been powerfully speaking to the leaders of a UK charity called ‘Grassroots Trust’ who felt a clear leading to begin a work of some kind in Las Americas. After spending several years working together with local churches and the team on the ground, God miraculously worked his hand and in April 2003, ‘Grassroots Trust’ opened The Living Room Centre, the team finally had a base and the ministry was born!

So what is The Living Room?

The Living Room is a centre situated in the heart of the nightlife resort of Las Americas. We aim to reach people through love, support and friendship and use The Living Room Centre as a way of doing that. Many from the community come to chill out, chat and hang out with friends. Some, however, come out of a real sense of need, when their party lifestyle on the island gets to them. This means that beneath the great atmosphere of people laughing and joking around God is

always moving. We support people, listen to people, share our testimonies and pray with people. God gives us so many opportunities to speak into people's lives and to share his love with them.

At night, we visit the bars, clubs and streets of the nightlife strips; dancing, having a laugh and chatting to the people we meet and it is out of these times that the real conversations come. Loads of young people have come to Las Americas for a good time, but they actually find that it's quite empty. They are so close to falling off the edge and yet they are so open to Jesus. Many off-load issues and problems they are going through, many listen and ask us the answers to their soul-searching questions, some people even take Bibles and accept prayer from us.

We exist in an environment in which every night is a Saturday night. Young people come here with the sole purpose of letting their hair down and letting down their inhibitions and boundaries. We see open drug-taking, binge-drinking, vomiting, people collapsing in the street, fighting, nudity, and people having sex in public places. Yet, alongside all of that, we see Jesus really changing lives here.

We have had **so many** encounters with people on the streets of Las Americas and in The Living Room centre over the years that it's impossible to remember or even count them all. We have had so many young people asking questions about Jesus, wanting prayer, coming to church and opening up about their lives. We have seen people saved, baptised and go on to walk with Jesus for years, becoming pastors, evangelists, leaders and even setting up ministries in other places. We have seen addiction broken, unbelieving people, slowly start to wonder if God is real and people ask for or accept prayer for the very first time in their lives. We have heard young people who have never ever met another Christian before decide we are *"quite cool actually"* and that we *"make a lot of sense"*. We have seen a broken man on the brink of suicide, be persuaded that there is hope that things could be better. We have seen a young girl abused by every man she has ever known, start to believe in a God that loves her. Drug dealers have been reduced to tears by the powerful words of Christ, girls have decided not to sell their bodies anymore.

Through love and months of conversations we have seen someone who was absolutely convinced that science is the only answer, slowly start to wonder what a living relationship with God would be like. A stripper hears the Bible explained in a way that she understands and then wants one; whilst a heroin addict who is unsure if he still has a soul, comes to ask us what we think. A man diagnosed with

Hepatitis C and sentenced to a slow and painful death, is miraculously healed one week and the next a young guy is moved to admit that he wants “what you all have”. Young people start to realise that sexuality is precious and question the way society lives and lies of the enemy are broken down as Jesus opens up the way for us to speak truth into people's lives. “Do you think one day I will be a Christian like you?” one girl asks one night. “Am I going to heaven?” asks another. We have stood Bible in hand, sharing Christ, in the middle of the madness, prayed with people in the middle of the vomit and comforted and reassured in the middle of the desperation.

A 20-something year-old lad with no church background stands reading a chapter out of our Bible and is amazed as he explains “*the words just jumped out to me*”. A homeless man, addicted to heroin smiles as we sit and have coffee with him; a child whose mum sells her body to support the family, forgets the situation, whilst we play football with him; the mentally ill become sane as we pray earnestly for them and the sceptic becomes slightly less sceptical as they watch us day after day, night after night loving this community. All of this is possible, because Christ first loved us...

The hard part, is that it is impossible to measure a changed life. How can you know when someone who is 20 steps away from Jesus has, as a result of your conversation, moved to only being 19 steps away? Who knows which of these encounters are going to make a difference eternally? Only God. So we give it over to him, daily trusting that this small sample of stories are not the beginning and they are not the end, they are just part of someone's journey!

*

Kate had always been surrounded by depression and death. She went from bad relationship to bad relationship and was really lonely, so started to drink for confidence and to feel comfortable. She met The Living Room team and used to chat to us about things she was going through as she knew she could trust us. She even came to church once. Kate went through a really hard time in Tenerife and went quite wild to deal with it. She drank more and more and went on benders for months, until one day she broke down, feeling suicidal and a complete mess. It was around this time she had a conversation with one of the girls from the team. In her own words she explains:

“That conversation changed the course of my life, I admitted that I wanted to come back to church but wasn’t sure. She encouraged me to come and said that I was always welcome, so I did. I felt jealous for what everyone at this church had and I wanted it myself. After church I used to hang out with everyone, I felt like I belonged and I could finally trust people. I had been going for about a month when I prayed and asked God to help me and change me, I broke down in tears. For the first time I knew that things were different and things had changed. Jesus had touched my life. I wanted to give my life to him. My journey of self destruction ended. I stopped drinking as I had changed inside and didn’t feel like I needed to drink anymore. I always thought I needed the love of a man and felt lonely, but once I found Jesus, He took all the loneliness away. All my friends keep asking what has changed and what is different about me. I know the answer is Jesus. I was at a point where I felt I had nothing to live for, now I have everything to live for.”

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After getting into some trouble back home, **Martin** moved to Las Americas. He quickly became very popular in the community and often called into The Living Room for a cup of tea. He mentioned God a few times as he explained that he had been really close to his prison chaplain during a stint in jail. One night, as the team were doing the rounds, he shyly explained to us that he kept having urges to go to church. We told him about our church in Tenerife, a great church full of people who are passionate for Jesus and invited him to come with us sometime. He said he would and proceeded to count off numerous times that he had prayed and seen God answer his prayers in an amazing way. We were all excited about the possibility of Martin giving his life to Jesus. One Sunday morning he turned up at church unexpectedly with his girlfriend who rolled her eyes admitting, *“Martin wants to become a Christian and I love him, so I am here too”!* It was a great service and both of them stayed for hours afterwards asking question after question about Jesus and what it meant to follow him. Martin gave up drinking and taking drugs, saying that he had really identified with what had been said and it made a lot of sense to him. A member of the team was getting baptised the following week and he said he would like to come to that service too. Unfortunately before the next Sunday came he had got himself into trouble with some locals and had to leave the island. We were sad to see him go, but, as we often have to do here, we gave him over to God's hands, knowing that Martin took a significant step in his journey towards Christ during his time here.

Jo moved here and quickly got very wrapped up in the drug-taking, binge drinking scene. She hung around with a group of girls who were very wild and were always involved in some shocking situation and story. The others seemed to handle it, but we began to be more and more worried about Jo, the decisions she was making and the situations she was putting herself in. She was becoming known as 'Crazy Jo' and no-one wanted anything to do with her. We knew we had to do something. We contacted her family through Facebook (something we never do!) and explained to them how urgent it was that they came and took Jo home. We were really praying that her sisters would see how desperate her situation was and not think we were a group of interfering Christians! God worked a miracle though, helping us to find Jo, allowing her sisters to understand how serious the state of Jo's mental health was and convincing her to go back home. We left all her stuff behind and even managed to get her on a plane without a passport! Her family thanked us again and again for being there for Jo, when no-one else cared.

*

Brooke says: *"I've never been the type of person to think too much about things. I never really gave anything much thought – career, kids, God – that kind of stuff. When I worked in Tenerife, I'd stand there and think about anything and everything! One night I asked the others that I worked with 'how do you think the moon got there?' they laughed, said I was off my head! Then, one night I met this guy from The Living Room who gave me a lolly and said he was a Christian. I thought 'that's weird, he looks normal!'. He told me about a centre for workers, I went the next day and was surprised how chilled out it was. I couldn't believe they had PG Tips & chocolate biscuits, as I hadn't had a cup of tea in 3 months!! Whilst I was there I met Wendy, who worked there and thought she was normal too...She started talking to me and I started off-loading my life to her. It felt weird telling a complete random stranger, but I couldn't stop. I got home and felt like the world had been lifted off my shoulders. It might not sound like a big deal to you, but it was to me. I'd never been able to talk to **anyone** about how I felt or what was going on. My Dad had been a heroin addict all my life and I shared my life in and out of my Mum's abusive relationships with men. I lied to both my friends and myself about it and made up an imaginary life for myself. That night I thought about everything I knew to do with God... it wasn't much! I wondered if God was actually real, then I found a Bible in my drawer. It might as well have been in French – I didn't understand a thing!*

After that night though, I was different. It's hard to explain in words, but something had changed inside me. I started to think about God all the time, although I didn't tell anyone. When I read the Bible again it started to get interesting, it was every topic you could think of written in one book. I learned about how the world had become so bad God, had to send His son Jesus to save it. I thought about all the bad things I had done wrong. I had been hurt by a lot of people, but I'd also hurt a lot of people. I'd become so angry I didn't care about anyone including myself. I got angry with God and spent the next few months mainly arguing with Him. God was faithful and never gave up on me though, like a real father. Over time I was able to trust Him with my life and talk to Him on a daily basis. He healed my heart and gave me hope. Without Him, I'd hate to think we're I'd be now".

*

Norwegian Lars came to visit us at The Living Room one day as he was looking for friendship. He explained that he had cancer of the liver due to years of substance abuse. He wasn't scared to die, but admitted he was scared to face God. We had loads of conversations with him over the following weeks about Jesus, things slowly slotted into place for him and Lars gave his life to Jesus. Before he left he joyfully told us that he was ready to die and was no longer scared to face Jesus. On his return back to Norway, we received a phone call from him with the incredible news that it turned out Jesus had healed him too. Now he is cancer-free, lives in Norway and is witnessing to his friends and family about the love of Christ.

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Anthony was a manager of a failing bar, in dire straits financially, all his so-called friends had abandoned him and his mental health was suffering. Over the last year he had lost both his parents and his uncle, his wife had left him and taken his child too. He was depressed; the whole community were worried about him. One night whilst visiting him, he opened up admitting how close he'd been to suicide at times. We got chance to encourage him, telling him he was a good man and had a future. Later on that evening, he came looking for us and asked us to go back to the bar as he wanted to read a letter to us that he had written a few months ago. It was pure despair on paper, one sentence read *"I want to live but don't know how to"*. We told him again God had a plan for his life and he could get help. After a while, we left his bar for the second time, however, one of the team felt strongly that God was telling him to go back and to tell Anthony again that he was a good man and had a future. So he did. He actually ended up leaving the bar and going

back to say the same thing eight times! We laughed! But God was serious and moving in Anthony's life. Who knows what was prevented from happening that evening? We prayed and prayed that God's words would sink into his heart and amazingly a few days later he agreed to go back to the UK and into a rehab where he could get help and counselling. God always seems to lead us into the right place at exactly the right time.

*

Maria and Jodie were two girls I got to know really well. I used to meet up with them in my spare time and often had conversations about God. As it was coming up to **Maria's** 21st birthday, I thought I would buy her a Bible. So I bought her a funky, pink, 'The Message Bible' and handed it to her, slightly nervous about how she would take it. However, she really loved it and said it was really cool and kept showing it to everyone. I still pray that she keeps it and God nudges her to read it one day. The surprising part of this story, however, was how much this Bible affected **Jodie**. She was from Northern Ireland, very closed about religion and had never really chatted about it before, but the Bible seemed to really touch her and she kept saying how lovely it was, hinting that she would like one and that she would like to start coming to church. She asked me to tell her why I was a Christian, how and why I gave my life to Him and asked loads of questions. I don't know what Jesus was doing in her that day, but he was definitely doing something. My favourite part about the work here is the way God uses the long term relationships we build with people. You never know when it might happen, but suddenly, out of the blue, someone opens up to you in an awesome way and you can see God really moving forward in their life.

*

Poppy had lost both her parents. She was absolutely devastated by it and had no idea how to handle it, so she had tried to block out the pain with drink and drugs. She admitted one night that as a result she couldn't understand how there could possibly be a God. Not long later, one of her friend's from The Living Room was getting baptised and so she agreed to come to church. She was really touched by Jesus in the service and sobbed all the way through. She said it was the first time she's been happy in ages and she slept better that week than she has in ages. She said she felt like someone was hugging her as she fell asleep.

Jess was a mixed up girl with a lot of issues. People didn't take her seriously. In fact, they used to bully her as she was a little bit slow and didn't always wear the cleanest or the most fashionable clothes. She had a bad reputation for sleeping around a lot and was looked down upon by the other workers. Jesus broke my heart for her straight away and I wanted to talk to her. After realising I was from Sheffield, where she was born, she opened up and explained that before she moved to Tenerife she had been in an awful relationship, suffered a miscarriage and was still incredibly upset about the way her ex was treating her. Not only that, but she had lost her brother a year ago and had been drinking every day since. We talked about dealing with her issues and I asked if she'd ever spoken to anyone about what she was going through or if she had ever received counselling. She hadn't and admitted she had no-one to talk to. I told her she could always come to The Living Room Centre and talk to me, if she wanted to and she burst into tears and said she would really like that. Over the next few months, she became a regular visitor, saying "I love it up there, everyone is so friendly and nice". She was such a sweetheart and looked upon us as her big sisters, coming for advice but mainly she came because we loved her.

*

Peter was a Northern lad who came from a broken family and had lots of emotional pain. He didn't believe in God due to the things he had gone through, but liked the Living Room Team and became our friends. He became a regular at the centre and used to socialise with us on our days off too. If there was a day at the beach, he would come, if there was a BBQ, he would come, eventually he realised all his best friends in Tenerife were Christians. They all went to church so why shouldn't he? He began to come along and was quite impressed with how he found it, nothing like what he had expected. These people were real. He had questions and asked the team. He also admitted that he knew God was real and loved to hear all the stories about how he had changed people's lives. He never made an official decision to follow Jesus, but we know that God will still be chasing after him and we were lucky enough to be used to be part of his story.

*

Polish Karl started coming to The Living Room as his friends all came. He was very sceptical of us and seemed just to watch us for weeks. Eventually he warmed to us and began to open up, admitting "*we were good people*". The months went by and a real friendship developed between him and the team. He was intelligent and talked endlessly with us about what we believed. We spent

hours talking to him about Jesus and had some very powerful conversations with him, but each time he seemed to get close to a breakthrough, he would run away from it and not come to see us for a while. Suddenly we didn't see him for a long time. The months went by, then, one day, we received a phone call. It was Karl, he was in prison in Poland as the police had picked him up. He missed us and still calls us to say hello. Though he had originally been sceptical of us to begin with, we became the only ones he stays in touch with.

*

Rebecca told us one night that she had borrowed a book from The Living Room and found that it was one of the best books she had ever read. It had changed her view of Christians and she wished her sister could come out here and meet us as her sister struggled with depression, yet Rebecca knew that we could help her. In her opinion, we had a certain way with people unlike any professional she had ever met. She said she didn't know what it was, but she could see something in us. We told her, it was Jesus!

*

Alex moved to Tenerife with a serious heroin addiction. After putting himself through cold turkey and managing to kick his addiction, he replaced it with another – alcohol. Everyone in Tenerife drinks a lot, but Alex had a serious problem. He couldn't recognise the people he worked with and was never sober. Things hit an all time low and he found himself homeless. Alex had met the Living Room team as they did the rounds at night chatting to people and he also used to receive a christmas present from them every year so as he lay on the street pavement one night, he thought to himself “If anyone can help me, The Living Room can”. He decided to come up and ask for help. We managed to help him get into a christian rehab on the island where he gave his life to Christ. Alex went on to overcome his addiction, got a good job, a house and is now a wise man of God who is married to one of The Living Room Team!!

Working here is just an incredible adventure with Jesus, one in which you never know where he is going to take you or what he is going to do through you. People often ask me “*Does anyone really want to talk to you though?*” The answer is “*Yes!*” Because we don't ‘Bible-bash’, we don't preach at people, we just step into their world and make friends. We pray and trust in God that He will open up the door in people's lives and move in the way he wants to move ... and he does.

Telford Sanctuary

TelfordLive writes:

Eleven o'clock on a Saturday night. Normally I'd probably have had a glass of wine or two and be coming to the end of a film on TV I'd seen before. Tonight was different. As part of my commitment to carry out four volunteering slots in Telford, tonight was the third, and lining up to be one of the most arduous yet.

Sanctuary offer a safe space for vulnerable clubbers in Wellington, Telford to gather themselves, sober up, get first aid, or warm up in the dry with some free tea and toast. It is situated in the makeshift cafe area at the back of the Methodist Church at the top of New Street.

Makeshift, although describing exactly what it is, does not convey how cool the team make this place. The church is newish, replacing an old wooden structure, and the room we're transforming tonight can host everything from the Brownie and Boys Brigade meetings to playgroups. With some subdued lighting, chill out music, professional kitchen and laid back seating, I can think of many cafes that don't come up to standards here.

11:10pm and creating the cafe is the first task, bringing all the tables, chairs and lighting down from the cavernous attic using the new stairs. Previously a ladder was employed and the cafe was lowered down the hatch as I imagine an 18th century schooner was loaded by dockers piece by piece. The set up is complete and subtle 'Ibiza chill out sounds' float around as we chat about previous experiences and the night ahead.

Including me, the team comprises six: Deborah, Heather, Linda, Dewi and Sean. Safety briefing commences, and I'm impressed with both how the evening has been organised with regards to safety, and how professional the set up is. Everyone has a personal radio, there are trained first aiders, no one is left alone and personal safety is paramount.

12pm. I'm handed my Sanctuary body warmer and we split into two teams. One looking after the cafe and one ventures outside with signage, the goodies box and a table. It strikes me how dark it is on the short walk from the church car park to 'Pussy Cats' entrance. There is a light out on the 'Tan Bank Car Park' which doesn't help.

A steady stream of people, in various states of sobriety, drift from all directions to finish their night with dancing at the club. Small groups of revellers congregate as they wait for friends to all go in together. The atmosphere is convivial and good-natured. Our first encounter with a clubber about 12:30am sets the scene for the evening. 'You guys are amazing. You helped get my friend into a taxi a couple weeks ago'.

Sanktuary was set up by Mark Berry in 2008. It's a Christian group based on the willingness to help people without judging them. The team point out that volunteers are welcome whatever their faith, or even if they have no faith at all. It's not about converting people to Christianity or promoting this Church. It's about keeping people safe, caring and making each Saturday evening in Wellington a much more pleasant place to be. Who could argue with that? It's true to say, that without the Church offering the cafe facilities; it would be a much poorer experience for the volunteers and the party goers.

Our hour shift outside the club draws to an uneventful close. Just when we are about to go inside for a welcome hot drink and a warm up, a woman emerges from the steel gates in a slightly agitated state. She's on her own, having been ejected from the club and manhandled out. From what we can gather, following an altercation in the club, she has been separated from her friends and her bag is missing. The bag contains her life. Mobile phone, ID, keys, money. Right now, all she has are the clothes she stands up in. Her friends don't know she is outside. Deborah and Heather approach. She has a cut above her eye, nothing too serious, but she doesn't want anyone to look at it.

Deborah is a leader, not just a leader of our sub-team, or the team as a whole, but a leader of people. I've seen leaders before and Deborah knows how people work as well as any I've seen. At 2am this is inspiring. While Heather consoles and calms the lady, Deborah negotiates with the door security to find the lady's friends and attempt to retrieve her belongings. As the story unfolds, the clubber tells of an assault and the police are called. A few minutes later the police take over and an ambulance arrives to take the clubber to A&E.

I wonder what would have happened had Sanktuary not been here. No money, no phone, separated from friends. Who would have helped her? If this were your daughter, your sister, your friend or neighbour: how would you feel? If you found yourself in this situation, what would you do?

About 2:20am we went inside. The tea was warm and welcome and the jammy dodger, perfection! We took a moment to reflect and compare with previous weeks. "I've never done a shift where there wasn't at least one fight". "We had seven fights a few weeks back, so we are due a break". Heather decided to volunteer after seeing the tweets from @sanktuary on twitter. Her daughter has also helped out and is a similar age to many we're seeing stepping into the free flip flops.

It's 2:45am. I'm glad that I took a nap yesterday afternoon and freed up my 4am to 11am Sunday morning schedule, so I could have a lie in. A few minutes later and we're back outside. One of the rooms in the club is now closed and the cloakroom staff have gone home. A sign that the night has peaked and no one else will be allowed in.

The box of flip flops, space blankets and lollipops becomes lighter as revellers in good spirits take the relief offered. The silver space blankets turn the girls into clubbing superheroes as the cold wind brings goose bumps up Tan Bank. I lead a few people to the cafe from the club gates, and then take a walk back, leaving the inside team to make the toast and coffee in the warm.

3:45am - a police patrol turns up and stands with us. The club closes and those left inside meander out to wait for taxis. Often a flash point, the council Taxi Marshalls are on hand to make sure the right people get into the right cabs. Door staff, Police, 'Taxi Marshalls' and the Sanktuary team all have a mutual respect for each other. It's a good feeling.

By 4:10am it's done. The last clubbers are taxied away. No fights tonight. The last one to leave tells us she has work in about 6 hours. We take the table, collect up the signs and we head back. As we turn the corner an alarm gets louder and louder. The last clubbers to leave the cafe had thought it a good idea to set off the fire alarm as they exited the building. Cue Deborah making phone calls at 4:30am to other Church folks to try and find a way of turning it off.

We pack the cafe back into the attic, the chill out sounds replaced by the shrill two tone alarm deafening us all. The evening complete, I head home. It's 4:45am and properly light. Nigh on six hours, but certainly doesn't feel that long. An evening of tea, good company, caring for people and keeping people safe. An eye opener most certainly, but more for the good of what the Sanktuary team deliver than the post-club carnage set in my mind's eye.

Wash My Pink Jumper

Kym-Marie Cleasby (founder of Wash My Pink Jumper) writes:

Wash My Pink Jumper was born out of the harsh reality of the lives that we live.

The Parent's Story:

Sometimes God can speak and we just don't listen. I wonder if God knows, and He's just softening us up? We've all had our hard times and for parents, these can surface out of the teenage lives of our children. Out of hardship, God can make new beginnings.

Our teenage daughter, whom we love, did not appreciate our advice about alcohol; staying out late and boys. She had a new freedom, away from the family home, out clubbing and she was going for it. There were days and nights when Sophie did not come home. Wasted to the point of amnesia she would crash on the floor of the party's host and on waking, phone home for a lift. Once, we had a series of, *"everybody hates me ..."* calls from the 'Isle of Wight Festival'. Then finally the anticipated *"please rescue me..."* call we didn't want. Her phone cut out and in trying to contact her via other phones, the police told us (erroneously) that they had ejected Sophie for drunk and disorderly behaviour at 1am in the morning. That journey to Newport was desperate.

Then came University. Day one; the Student Union arranged a Fresher's Pub Crawl. There she was; a new town, new friends, new life and new bank account, topped up courtesy of the government, with thousands of pounds, just waiting to be spent.

We had received a few midnight phone calls where Sophie was less than coherent and as parents, we discussed how bad the situation could be. One hundred miles away, we could do little to influence her except give advice over the phone. It wasn't until Christmas that we twigged, and overdrawn one thousand pounds, Sophie was binge drinking. Attendance at Uni was very poor and she complained a lot, (too much) about the quality of the teaching, in preparation of low marks. We were on our knees in prayer for Sophie and hoped for a miracle.

The Daughter's Story:

I was so into clubbing nobody could tell me what to do. I hated my parents. I loved going out drinking and sharing a bottle of 'voddy' with my mates. I would say "*What is it with adults? They know nothing.*" I thought it was cool to get hammered, way before going to Uni. Once I got there it was a given. I mean, at least I wasn't as bad as some. I mean, OMG, there were some who really got totally wasted. I was sooo excited to be away from home, what else was I gonna do? I wasn't gonna be left out– I'm no party-poooper. I was bombarded with Facebook PM's to go out. To start with it was 'fresher's week' (which turned out to be fresher's year), and it was like party time all the time. It didn't stop. Loads of other students, who had never had their own space before, were having party after party, like it was normal. It didn't matter if you knew them or not, word got out and then you met loads more people and had more parties. Who could feel lonely? I wasn't going to have anyone say "*This girl's boring!*" and anyway I wanted to just do everything! But I was getting messed up.

The whole life experience thing was like awful. I hated adults. I hated tutors. Lectures were missed, essays not done, warnings, penalty marks. You know the thing. So I started to go out and drink more, just so I didn't have to think about the bad stuff. Soon it felt wrong not to be wasted. It was like, "*..don't even think about it.*" So when other students seemed to be settling down and getting into Uni – they were being 'boring', to my mind, they were just jealous, like they didn't understand me. My flatmates hated me. I didn't remember stumbling in at 3am, waking them all up, shouting, or being sick, making messes in the kitchen and bathroom. I didn't believe it even when they told me. That's just NOT me.

So, my behaviour felt normal, ok? The 'friends' who did go out 'clubbing' were my only friends. The peer pressure was huge, all they lived for was the booze. They were all about saying, "yes this is so cool," egging each other on to drink more and more. At my worst, I was drinking 200 units of alcohol each week, you know the safe level is only 14 units for a girl, right? Most people don't know that. It's like, just one or two shots are your total safe level for the whole day. Sometimes I began to suspect I was drinking too much, I wanted to live in a different way, but when I turned round I had no real friends to help. But my clubbing 'friends' were always there; "*what are you doing*"; "*lets go out*", "*don't leave me here on my own*" or whatever. Mobile peer pressure.

Soon enough I hated myself, hated the lifestyle but felt trapped. I looked for some kind of support, but there really was nothing. Totally zero. My family and friends

were saying I had a big problem but I really didn't feel I did. What did they know? At some really dark moments, I called out, but my family just said 'get help'. So where was it?

The thing I heard over and over was; 'you're an alcoholic' so guess what, I went to AA. I tried different meetings in different places – but they all seemed to be full of middle-aged men, or even older, who were in their own words, 'gagging for a drink'. There was no one who I remotely had anything in common with. The whole thing was just so wrong for me. It worked like this: a person would stand up, tell their story, the leader would say thank you or something and then move onto the next. No encouragement, no support, no discussion, nothing. What a waste.

I felt totally uncomfortable and completely exposed to these guys, who by their own admission, behaved so badly. I didn't want to be followed home by some wacko and so I gave up on AA. I began to feel extra depressed – I was already doing things I don't wanna talk about. Sh** I struggled to admit even to myself. I felt I was already in hell.

But right in the middle of that, there was some good stuff. I come from a close family, and had been raised with a massive fighting spirit. I wasn't going down without a fight. I was really determined. Nothing was gonna change unless I made it. I organised some therapy through Uni and with the help of a close family friend, slowly and painfully I made some progress. Then, amazingly, I stopped drinking completely for 18 months. There are still big things to tackle in my life and it's not at all perfect, but I'm getting there, with help from my 'big sister'. I'm on my own journey.

Kym-Marie's Story:

As well as being a parent, I was a director of a leading UK charity. Our work was spread across the world and I loved the challenge. But God had other ideas. He kept whispering to me. You need to do something for me, something new. I didn't understand His words. Of course I thought it was in connection with the charity I was working in. New things did happen, but God kept whispering in my ear. Our daughter's lifestyle was weighing heavily on my mind and there were times when I did picture something more than a Mother's love, but work pressures wiped it clean from my mind. Well, God is not to be ignored. Whispering was obviously not good enough in my case. Each week I have a bible study with my closest friends. We share. One week they spoke words over me that I will never forget. Verses from the Bible. Visions and encouragement. I called my daughter and laid plans.

If you are doing God's work, he is there before you are. I had no name for the charity, no written objectives but between us we knew what the charity was to be. It was for young women. It was to help them out of an alcohol fuelled chaotic lifestyle, and it was God centred. Isaiah chapter 66 verse 10 has spoken to me in the past and I first thought the charity would be called 'i66'; very iPhone friendly, very on trend. But God said no. I put together a focus group consisting of my close and trusted Christian colleagues and we had Thai food and fun throwing ideas around. The evening sped by, but we had no more ideas by the time we left the restaurant. We retired to the office and joked about "Aunty Viv" as a way of visualising our "Big Sisters" and then something from our family's past came up; our secret code. Both my girls knew that if they got into difficulties they could call home, and without raising any eye brows, ask mummy to "...wash my pink jumper." Our code for, "Rescue Me." Just by saying the name out loud, we knew we had found the cornerstone for the charity. It was obvious. Whoever we told, they loved it. It was our story in a nutshell.

All our preparations from then on were enhanced by the name. It makes us smile just saying it. People tell people, just so they can say "Wash My Pink Jumper" and explain the secret code. At our first exhibition, Christian Resource Exhibition, to launch the charity to the Christian world, we had visitors to the stand, just because of the name. We get local news interest, just because. We are top of Google, just because.

Wash My Pink Jumper is here. We support young women who realise that living is more important than drinking. We are now using the Twitter hash-tag of #christianloveinaction.

God has plans we know nothing of. We had just completed our first information pack when a friend phoned to say they were going to the new art gallery in town. The opening ceremony was to be carried out by ... no less than our Prime Minister, David Cameron. We printed off a copy, added a letter of introduction and thrust it into his hands at the ribbon cutting. A week later, due to local elections, Ed Miliband (leader of the Labour Party) is in town, on his soap box, in the town square, just as I was walking to the shops. Phew. Guess what I have in my bag? Yes it was our first DL handout asking for support. Poor Ed, what response did he expect when he asked for questions from the crowd? Wash My Pink Jumper! He read the handout and declared *"Everyone needs to support this charity!"* God bless you Ed. The result was that I had my picture in the local paper and a short editorial on "Wash My Pink Jumper". Result? Well, that led on to a BBC interview and volunteers calling me. This morning we have just had a call from the Oxford Mail. They want to do a big editorial with photos, on the Witney Helpline launch. God is so good.

God is also faithful. When my daughter was small, he gave us a verse from the Bible, and a word, to say that despite the journey, she would do great things and be a loud voice for Christ. Well, as I said at the beginning, out of hardship God can make new beginnings.

Appendix 1

Street Angels in Rhyme

The work of local projects has caused several people to become creative! A volunteer with Cleethorpes Street Angels and comic strip creator for The Beano – Steve Beckett – has designed a “Who are the Street Angels?” comic book (you can see his design on the cover!). A young artist from Halifax has created the amazing “dudes with wings” characters and some volunteers have put pen to paper with songs and poems:

Georgia Harrup, a volunteer with Halifax Street Angels, wrote and performed a song (downloadable from our web site):

Sometimes we all need a little hope and love
But what if you knew that
You could get it all from above?
A helping hand not to judge but to accept
A safe refuge where promises are kept
In time of need He’s watching over you
He’s always longing to help you through
In time of need He’s watching over you

Did you ever wonder
 who bought the miracle that you hoped for?
Did you ever wonder
 when things were wrong who opened that door
Don’t you ever think
 its more than coincidence, chance of fate?
Don’t you ever think
 there has got to be more to life than this?

I want you to know that
 where you see no ending He makes a way out
I want you to know that
 if you only ask Him, He will show you how.
It doesn’t really matter how bad
 your circumstances may seem
It doesn’t really what your situation may be
He is all you need

Are you fading and falling away
from all you long to be?
Are you looking for a brighter path
or someone to set you free?
What if I told you that I knew someone
who would always be there?
All you would have to do is
bow your head in prayer!

Val Northcombe, a volunteer with Boro Angels, wrote:

By your grace oh God we know
Only with You can we go
Reaching out to those in need
Our steps, we know, go where you lead.

Always there to give our aid
No need for us to be afraid
God, we feel your presence near
Everything we see and hear.
Loving God we know that you
Stand by us in all we do

A visitor to Sanktuary in Telford – Andrée – wrote this poem about her Saturday night with the project:

Someone to Watch Over Me:

ow my ears they hurt
'coz the beat's too loud
know i've drunk too much
inside I'm not too proud
lungs can 'ardly breathe
feel like a tub o' lard
no one sees i'm scared
i'm really not that hard
head's spinnin' round 'n round
my heart it's thumpin' fast

whatevah's goin' down
i'm hopin' it won't last

everythin's a blur
don't really wanna stay
to be wiv what occurs
just need to run away
want me mum to hold
so my world won't crash
want me dad to scold
when i am smokin' hash
my god it's freezin' out
how will I make it home
who will take my hand
see that I'm all alone

then I saw your face
glowin' angel bright
offerin' tea and warmth
in the dead of night
you held my eyes
touched my feet with love
wrapped me from the cold
so i wdnt feel so rough
then I looked again
'n saw my mother's smile
saw my father's pride
not his backhanded bile
I never thought
that I would ever see
someone care enough
to watch over me.

Appendix 2

Endorsements

'They are truly special people who deserve the highest praise.' **Sergeant Dave Apsee formerly of Halifax Neighbourhood Police**

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"There is much to be celebrated with the work done by Christians in the night time economy. I greatly admire the creativity and commitment shown by Street Angels, Street Pastors and others; and I am delighted to hear of acts of service taking place throughout the week and at weekends too. I wholeheartedly support and endorse the work they are seeking to do. There is still much to do in our increasingly complex society and I pray for greater collaboration between the different groups engaged in this aspect of the Church's mission. Keep up the good work!" **Bishop Dr Joe Aldred, Secretary, Minority Ethnic Christian Affairs, Churches Together in England**

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"Christian faith calls us out of our comforts and into the places where we are needed to serve. I fully endorse these initiatives that put us where our communities need us to be the presence of the Jesus we read about in the Gospels." **The Right Revd Nick Baines, Bishop of Leeds**

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"This is exactly the kind of revolutionary social cause that should be in every city. I commend the work of Street Angels to transform their community. The problems of the world do not go away when the sun goes down, and neither do these amazing volunteers." **Pastor Matthew Barnett, founder of the Los Angeles Dream Center**

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"Thousands of Christian's volunteer every weekend to care for people who are enjoying a night out in our towns and cities. I believe this is exactly where Jesus would be and so wholeheartedly commend the work of CNI." **Matt Bird, Chief Executive of Make It* Happen & Chair of The Cinnamon Network**

"I have been out with Street Angels in Guildford and Camberley and have experienced at first hand the great work that is being done in bringing help, reassurance, care and genuine human concern and compassion on to the streets of our towns. It is a very simple, direct and practical witness of service following Christ's own example." **The Right Reverend Ian Brackley, Bishop of Dorking**

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"I would like to say how impressed I am with the support and help initiatives like: Street Angels, Town Pastors, NightLight and Street Pastors, provide to young people and those who are out at night in our towns and cities. Having three young daughters myself I appreciate how valuable it is having people out on the streets that are looking out for others because they care about their safety and wellbeing.

Your services are exactly the sort of thing that I would like to see encouraged across other areas and situations, and I would like to thank you and your team for all the work they are doing. Many thanks for your valuable support for young people. I do believe that all faith groups have a significant role to play in developing safer neighbourhoods." **Baroness Helen Newlove, Community Safer Champion**

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"I warmly commend Christian Nightlife Initiatives and the valuable work with those at risk on our streets at night as well as a friendly presence which is reassuring to all. Along with Street Pastors the Street Angels provide a safety net for those who are vulnerable and in need on our streets, especially in urban areas, bringing together Christians from different denominations and backgrounds in common service." **The Rt Revd Christopher Chessun, Bishop for Urban Life and Faith and Bishop of Southwark**

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"All over the country the church is to be found on a Friday or Saturday night on the street, being and speaking the good news. As an Evangelical Alliance we want to cheer these teams on, and tell stories of what God is so obviously blessing." **Steve Clifford, CEO Evangelical Alliance**

"I have always been impressed with the work of Street Angels and Street Pastors. I wasn't prepared in reading this latest book, for the impact it has had on me. I cannot see myself donning a uniform; I think that you have to be a very special and dedicated person, to want to go out so late at night, in the freezing cold, dark and to help people who are drunk. I wish I was that person, but I am not. However, I feel compelled to pray for Street Angels and all their volunteers and support their work in any way that I can. The strength of Street Angels, is that it is inclusive to people of other faiths, while retaining a very definite Christian identity. This book is peppered with testimonies of people coming to a faith in Jesus, because of the genuine love and kindness of volunteers. In no way does Street Angels, shy away from its' core Christian values. Volunteers across the UK become Jesus' hands and feet and mouth and as the testimonies suggest, this leads to opportunities for people to discover a faith in Jesus for themselves. It is wonderful to read about so many churches, from so many denominations, working together and this project is a catalyst for local Christian Unity. It is my prayer that not only this vital work will continue, but that it will go from strength to strength. I wholeheartedly endorse all the work of Street Angels and the Christian Nighlife Initiative." **Rebekah Brettle, Founder and CEO of Neighbourhood Prayer Network**

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"This is an excellent example of how people from different organisations and backgrounds can work together for the greater good of the community. I recognise that such projects provide valuable services which are not easily accessible from emergency services." **James Brockenshire MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Crime Prevention.**

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"It is incredible to see the work that Christian night time initiatives which include Street Angels do in towns and cities across the UK each weekend. This is certainly the Big Society in action. As I travel, I'm constantly told by councillors, council officers, the police, social services etc, about the impact this kind of service, offered by volunteers and churches, makes in helping to shape healthy and stronger communities. I wish you well in all you do." **The Revd Steve Chalke MBE, Founder of Oasis and Faithworks**

"As Vice Chair for the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Alcohol Misuse I am keen to act on the concerns of alcohol and drug misuse which beset society at large. These two issues should not be focused on simply one area, but must be seen a national priority. If we are to address these concerns, there must be a strategic approach, bringing together many partners who wish to support improving this area. Christian Nightlife Initiatives is an organisation who respond nationally by offering strong delivery of support in just over 100 towns and cities. I welcome their work which seeks to bring alleviation of those most vulnerable in our night time economy. I am grateful to the thousands of volunteers who also assist this work, it is great to see the Big Society in action, and I wish you all the best for the future." **Tracey Crouch MP, Vice Chair for the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Alcohol Misuse**

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"I love it when I see God's Church waking up to the needs of the local community and getting stuck in. It was a privilege to meet with the Trustees and Church Leaders in Halifax where Street Angels was born. Christian Night-time Initiatives in the local town or city centre fit in with what Hope is all about: working together in both words and actions, touching people's lives and making a practical difference." **Roy Crowne, Executive Director of HOPE Together**

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"Whenever we are in conversation with local authorities or similar groups it's interesting to point these good people to statistics - like the reduced street crime, lower re-offending rates, etc - that 'prove' the efficacy of Biblical Christianity. It's not just a hobby for those who can't play golf - authentic Christianity works!" **Nigel Gordon, former European Director Luis Palau Association**

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"I included a story about Street Angels in my book "Redeeming Our Communities - 21st Century miracles of social transformation" because it is a great initiative and one which provides a way for churches and the police to work together for the good of the community. Crime rates are falling as people of goodwill lend their support to the police in the important work they do across this nation." **Debra Green OBE, Director City Links Redeeming Our Communities**

"I am delighted to welcome an exciting partnership between Churches Together in Britain and Ireland and Christian Nightlife Initiatives. I believe Christian Nightlife Initiatives and Street Angels provides excellent support to projects in the four nations and I would want to encourage them in their efforts to be a presence in the many localities in which they are placed. With the number of projects rapidly growing, there is a need for Christian engagement in our night time economy. I offer my good wishes and prayers for all you are doing and look forward to all that lies ahead through your work." **The Revd Bob Fyffe, General Secretary of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland**

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"Street Angels - CNI network is making a big difference in our communities. The volunteers, many of them from local churches and Christian groups, offer support to those who are most vulnerable in city and town centres. This is a visible expression of the love of Jesus offered by volunteers who are transforming the night-time economy in partnership with others. The vision that was born in Halifax has inspired many and I pray that it will continue to do so." **Revd Ruth M Gee - President of the Methodist Conference (2013-2014)**

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"I am pleased to support Street Angels, part of the Christian Nightlife Initiatives Network. Street Angels is a sign of the fruit that comes from close ecumenical collaboration between Christians as they seek to serve their brothers and sisters in our towns and cities through prayer, support and sharing of other resources. With my prayers and blessings for this important work." **The Most Revd Bernard Longley, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Birmingham**

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"Experiencing something of the work and ministry of Street Angels myself over recent months, I am delighted to endorse the national strategy Street Angels has to provide a visible, strong and strategic presence within communities around the UK in the name of Christ." **Commissioner John Matear, Territorial Commander of The Salvation Army, United Kingdom with the Republic of Ireland**

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"The work of faith based groups such as the Christian Nightlife Initiatives Network can be so important in the strengthening of our communities. Your mobilisation of local volunteers ensures people remain alert to crime and vigilant against it. That is so valuable to people up and down this country. I wish you every success as you continue your important efforts in the future." **The Right Honourable Ed Miliband MP, Leader of the Labour Party**

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"The work of CNI is very impressive, making a huge difference for good on our city and town streets at night. I am delighted that many Baptists are involved already and want to encourage even more to volunteer as Street Angels and in other initiatives. This is a great way to show God's care and to bring Kingdom transformation to a community." **The Revd Kathryn Morgan, former Mission Adviser, The Baptist Union of Great Britain**

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"The work of groups like Street Angels and Street Pastors is making a big difference. I am a huge supporter of this type of initiative. Now we need to get responsible selling and supply of alcohol..." **The Right Reverend Lee Rayfield, Bishop of Swindon**

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"I am a great admirer of your work and wish you every success for the future. The Department for Communities and Local Government recognises the importance of your work, given the problems of crime and anti-social behaviour that blight our town centres at night. It is clear that projects such as these, led by faith communities, are playing a crucial part in bringing about the safer, more integrated communities that we want to see." **The Right Honourable Eric Pickles MP, the Secretary of State**

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"The commitment and dedication of all those involved in this initiative is a shining example of how hard-working volunteers can transform communities and make our streets safer. Keep up the good work!" **Steve Webb Liberal-Democrat MP for Thornbury & Yate**

"As a Bishop in the Church, I believe in a core value of service to the community and I see this demonstrated week by week by volunteers across the country who give up their time to serve the needs of the night time economy, through Street Angels and other similar initiatives. I have been active in my own Diocese to promote, encourage and pray for the groups which go out. Indeed I have really valued the nights I have spent out with our volunteers in Wakefield, Huddersfield and Halifax. The respect that Christian Nightlife Initiative has gained already is a visible sign of God at work. I hope and pray for the growth of this grass roots movement. Please be assured of my continued thoughts and prayers. Thanks again for all that is being done in Christ's name." **The Right Reverend Tony Robinson, Bishop of Wakefield**

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"It is important that we celebrate the work done by the community to create safer town and cities, especially in our night time economy. These are the days when I believe those of faith have new opportunities to do this. Having met with Adam, I am encouraged by the work that has done faithfully and continues weekly to do. This is a fantastic initiative which I pray will grow and develop. Never lose heart and keep going!" **Gavin Shuker MP for Luton South and Vice President of Christians in Parliament**

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"I warmly welcome the work of Christian Nightlife Initiatives. Our town- and city-centres face big night time challenges. In a grass roots movement which is helping to build a new community spirit, a growing number of church-based groups are grappling with these challenges. Encouraging stories are emerging from their work out and about in the small hours, and I wish Christian Nightlife Initiatives every success in its important work." **Stephen Timms MP for East Ham, Shadow Minister for Employment and Labour's Vice Chair for Faith Groups**

Further information:

You can find out more about the work of ROC Angels at:

Web streetangels.org.uk
 festivalangels.org.uk
 loveyourstreets.org.uk

Facebook facebook.com/rocstreetangels

To start a Street Angels or Club Angels in your community visit our web site – **streetangels.org.uk** - where you will find all the information you need to do this.

As a charity we rely on donations from local projects and individuals to fund the ongoing work of ROC Angels. To support us financially visit:

streetangels.org.uk/donate