



IGNiTE

SPARKING PASSION FOR THE GOSPEL ACROSS THE UK | WINTER 2024



FAITHFUL PRAYERS

HIS WIFE PRAYED FOR DAVE FOR 35 YEARS; BUT IT TOOK
A VISIT TO A CHURCH BUILT IN 1840 TO HELP SAVE HIM

You think the early church had it bad!

A new documentary on Paul and Corinth shares some revelations

Just a minute

with Neighbourhood Chaplains coordinator



QR codes: We have introduced 'QR codes' to Ignite to make it easier to access our website. Just open your mobile phone camera, point the camera at the QR code image, tap the link that appears on your mobile screen, follow any instructions which will take you to the Counties website.

WELCOME TO IGNITE

I'm thrilled that here you will read stories of lives changed and God at work. I was delighted to meet Dave recently, and you can read his story of coming to meet Jesus after 35 years of witness and engagement with the Gospel. Sometimes things take longer than we hope, but to God a day is as a thousand years. He is patient, and we must be too!

After one 'false start' and Covid's interruption, it is great to hear what

God is doing now in the Community Church in Ross-on-Wye.

We'd love you to train with us through our new Connect Evangelists Training Programme – follow the link on the back cover!

May God bless you as you share the Good News with others!

Martin

Martin Erwin, CEO

Making Jesus known: inspiring and equipping local churches

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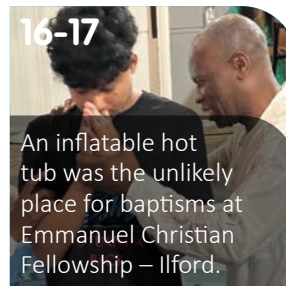
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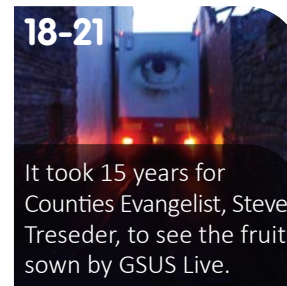
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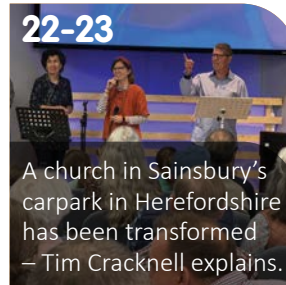
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NEWS IN BRIEF



Life exhibition celebrates visit from its 150,000th primary school student.

The Life exhibition reached a milestone at Oak Tree Academy in Stockton-on-Tees, County Durham, and Enniskillen Model School, Northern Ireland. Both Life exhibition units were in action during September, across the country, enabling Life exhibition to award Bibles to the 150,000 student to participate. Kevin Baldwin, Life coordinator said:

"As we had both units on the road hundreds of miles apart, it was impossible to be certain who our 150,000th participant was, so we gave Bibles to both groups of children. Life exhibition began in 2006. By 2007, 14,414 had connected with us. So, to get to 150,000 is an amazing achievement. Praise God."

The exhibition, in Enniskillen, was run with Sam Balmer from Fermanagh Christian Fellowship and Scripture Union workers. Both venues had helpers from the local church, presenting to the children.

Comments during the week were: "The songs were mint." "Best RE lesson ever." "When can you come back?" and "What else do you do?"

To find out more about Life exhibition contact Kevin Baldwin: lifexpo@countiesuk.org

or visit our website (Scan QR Code)



One2Lead a great success this Autumn



Over sixty students were enrolled in the One2Lead discipleship and training programme, at Venues in the East, Southwest and South Wales & Borders over the autumn.

Every weekend we saw the young people challenged in their faith and learn new ways to share their faith with friends, in their workplace, in school and even serving on mission trips.

We included sessions on Theology, personal growth, and an outdoor activity. One2Lead, Resource Coordinator, Dave Thomas, says:

"It has been a real privilege to see each of the students grow in their faith, to grow more confident in their ability, to

Reader's Letters

I have read 'Making Jesus Know Today and Tomorrow,' and found it totally engaging and challenging.

The 'baby is not thrown out with the bathwater' but we are reminded of how much our world has changed and the need, in some areas, for new approaches.

The Message is unchanging, but the method can be adapted to remain relevant and effective. Because chapters are stand-alone and can be taken in any sequence, they can indeed form a very accessible reference manual; I know I will return to it regularly and dip into it to challenge and encourage me.

An important and developing aspect of present-day evangelism is in cross-cultural situations and this is dealt with helpfully.

We are reminded that we all, as Christ-followers, have a responsibility for

We love hearing from you. So, if you would like to comment on an article in Ignite or Counties' work, please email: communications@countiesuk.org

evangelism and are directed by Scripture to "make the most of every opportunity", whether in our church setting, with neighbours, or seeing work as a Gospel opportunity.

I am grateful to Counties, and each of the contributors, for this initiative. It is a challenging, concise and insightful read.

I recommend this book to all Christians who have a heart for reaching others with the Good News of Jesus, and I believe it's a must-read for all church leaders.

Graham Scholefield

Strathaven,
South Lanarkshire,
Scotland.



To purchase a copy of the book, visit the Glo bookshop

go away from the weekend and share the good news of Jesus."

Currently, we have three venues and want to see One2Lead grow all over the Country. Students said:

"The best part of the weekend has been meeting people who love Jesus as much as I do. I've been able to talk about my favourite person in the world all weekend and it's been great."

"I keep coming because it is always a good weekend. It offers the opportunity

to deepen my knowledge of the Bible and gain practical skills about how to share my faith and fellowship."



Find out more about One2Lead here (Scan QR Code)



IN THE FOURTH PART OF OUR 125TH ANNIVERSARY,

Counties Evangelist, Phil Davies, reports on the Wales Event.



On 7 September, in Union College, Bridgend, as part of Counties 125th celebration, it was great to end the summer and start the autumn season with a joint celebration with GLO (Gospel Literature Outreach) who were celebrating 50 years ministry in Europe.

Around 90 people gathered from across South Wales for this unique event. This included lunch and refreshments, memories, and our vision for the future under the title *Foundations & Frontiers*.

It was a special day together as we shared the unique relationship that GLO and Counties have had over the past fifty years. We looked back through the years, to the strategic work by early Counties Evangelists and then at the work of GLO in Wales, which had started in 1974 with the ministry of David & Joy Prosser.

Although David had passed away in 1988, it was particularly poignant to interview Joy (pictured above) about those early days of GLO; in particular the Royal Welsh Show outreach which started in Builth Wells in 1975.

That ministry had been carried on by Counties evangelists such as Bruce

Anderson (now also with Jesus), Martin Erwin, Andy Goode and Phil Davies – working with teams of young people.

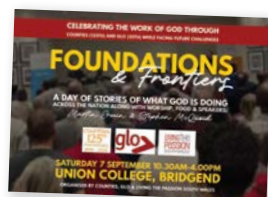
Below is the team from this past summer.



Next year will be the 50th anniversary of a witness that has happened each year since 1975 (apart from a 'foot and mouth' year and two Covid years).

With the cooperation of the Living the Passion South Wales Team, Counties, GLO, and many other exhibitors at the event, an uplifting day was had by all.

God's word was shared first by Martin Erwin (CEO, Counties) in the morning and then by Stephen McQuoid (General Director, GLO) in the afternoon.



Phil Davies says:

"It was a significant time as we reflected back on what God had done in the many decades of Counties and GLO ministry, and how we have served as coworkers in God's harvest field. It has been about team work and, as we look forward to the work to be done in revitalisation, church planting and growth, we see, in our history, the hand of God"

Nathan Davies (Church planting in Cardiff) writes:

"The Counties and GLO celebration in Bridgend was a day that truly inspired. Looking back and reflecting on a combined 175 years of faithful witness and gospel ambition in Wales, the UK and the world, reminded us of the heritage that we have and how God has used ordinary people for his kingdom."

Looking forward it was inspiring to think: 'Might God use people like us again and impact the world for His glory. A day seeing old friends and new, being uplifted in song together and exploring our call to go.'"

Lois Jones (nee Prosser):

"Both Counties and GLO are part of my rich heritage and I am forever grateful to both organisations. It was a privilege to be part of the day and share stories and testimonies, alongside my Mum (Joy Prosser) and so many of God's people, who have been called into full time service for Him. And who work tirelessly for the gospel of Jesus Christ."

John Wilkes (past CEO Counties & church leader in Newport):

"This proved to be a great opportunity to recall God's faithfulness and highlight some of the Lord's notable servants who have served him across South Wales and over the decades. Without naming names (for fear of omitting some), God has used some truly pioneering Welshmen (through Counties and GLO) to spread the Gospel, strengthen local churches and develop fruitful initiatives."

We are praying that events like this will continue to be used by the Lord of the Harvest to stimulate effective mission and promote deeper and meaningful fellowship for His glory."

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CONNECT
inspire | equip | engage



To find out how **YOU** can get involved in Counties Connect go here:



IGNITE INTRODUCES COUNTIES NEW EVANGELISTS

ANDY GOODE

HEREFORD

Andy Goode was a Counties Evangelist from 1999-2005 and returned this autumn.

In between times, he did some teaching, and part-time pastoring churches, and in 2012 he returned to run 'Show Jesus' which is a ministry whose prime goal is to share Jesus' love with individuals, groups, and communities.

'Show Jesus' is a Christian events charity with marquees, burger vans, gazebos, etc. It supports churches who want to participate in outdoor events such as the Royal Welsh Show where Counties trainees take part as part of their training. 'Show Jesus' also supported Tim Cracknell at the 125th anniversary Counties Connect 'Celebration in the Barn.'

Andy says: *"I just love being out there with people. I am an evangelist who does some pastoring, not a pastor that evangelises. I came back to Counties because that's where I fit. We do so much work with the Counties family that people are surprised when I said I wasn't a Counties Evangelist."*

"I love talking about Jesus, and Counties is the best avenue to do that. It's also



that grounding of being a wider network of evangelists and initiatives."

Over the years Andy has been involved with Neighbourhood Chaplains; trialling GSUS Live about which, Andy says: *"I took the first lesson and the 500,000th pupil;"* and establishing One2Lead, with Martin Erwin.

SIMON TERRY

EAST MIDLANDS

Simon became a Christian as a young man. He says:

"I embraced the Gospel, fleeing my attempts to merit God's love through my religious efforts."

His ministry, since leaving university, has grown out of a burden to connect the lost culture of our estates, towns and villages with the message of the Bible. Counties has provided him with a great support base for that work whilst opening further exciting opportunities for evangelism.

Simon serves at Woodhouse Eaves Baptist Church in the East Midlands. He is seeking to build bridges through community outreach, weekly services, a monthly luncheon and a literature table in Loughborough. Alongside this work



he is also editing an evangelistic book project that explores the big questions of life.

Over the years he has produced several lectures with live animal displays through working with 'Answers in Genesis'. Part of his vision is to design and develop a 'Creation Café' as an educational hub for visitors as well as a base to develop his presentations under the ministry 'Creation Encounters'.

LESLEY LAWRENCE

CARDIFF

I am married to Andrew, and we have three adult children.

We are members of Calvary Baptist Church, Cardiff. The church is on the main high street of Canton, which is a great position to reach out to the local community with the love of Christ.

Canton is one of the most ethnically diverse areas of Cardiff and has the most Welsh speakers. There are a significant number of people in the area with addictions, learning difficulties, and mental health challenges.



It is a joy to serve at Calvary. I enjoy bringing a message at our Sunday morning Service, I help at our mid-week group 'Community Praise' by bringing a Gospel message and coming alongside the vulnerable folk who attend.

My journey with Counties has been in stages. The Counties Evangelism Training Programme (ETP) was brought to my attention a few years ago.

In August 2023, I became an Associate Evangelist, and a year later, having completed the Counties ETP, I became a Counties Evangelist. I have grown and developed as an Evangelist through the training.

It's great to be one of the leaders of the Counties 'One2lead' programme for young people in South Wales and Borders.

The Lord has placed within me, a great passion for Wales. Since March last year, I have been travelling to all the Counties of Wales with my prayer partner Mary, to pray for the people and land of Wales.

I have started to learn the Welsh language so that I can speak to people in their heart language.



Do you have a passion for evangelism: look at our ETP on the website:

www.counties-training.org/etp



AN 'AIR FRYER' COURSE

run by Bishops Stortford Christian Assembly has given their Neighbourhood Chaplains team an opportunity to build relationships and share the Good News whilst cooking sesame prawn toast.



When Bishops Stortford Christian Assembly (BSCA) joined Neighbourhood Chaplains in November 2022, Steve Prince, who runs it, says: *"We had no idea how it was going to work out."* So, they began by identifying 500 houses close to the church and began knocking on doors.

Little did he know that two years later they'd be sitting with a group of people from the local community, alongside the mayor, cooking up sesame prawn toast, Sunday roasts and Chinese-style belly of pork, in air fryers, as part of an initiative to show people a cheap, quick, and easy way to improve what they eat; whilst building relationships and talking about

Jesus in an informal and friendly way.

The air fryer initiative came about from the church's Café Connect, which serves free tea, coffee and cakes to local people. Through the Cafe, Steve and the team have forged good relationships with many local organisations including the police, the Council, and social prescribers.

Social prescribers are employed by Primary Care Trusts and work with GP's surgeries, to identify people who may be having difficulties with their health and wellbeing and to find services that offer practical, social and emotional support.

It was here that Steve was approached by a representative of 'Home Instead'

which provides home carers to host the six-week 'air fryer' course.

The church was more than willing to rise to the challenge. On week one, Steve says the first question was: *"Who has an air fryer?"* and the second was: *"What do you cook in it?"* They all said: *"Chips."*

But as the weeks progressed not only did the group of about 15 people learn to cook a variety of food, but they also found themselves forming friendships.

"By hosting the course, we get the opportunity to invite people to Café Connect, and get to know them on a deeper level. We've also realised that our mission is not just to these people but also to the social prescribers and Home Instead workers."

"What's great about the course, is that once we've cooked the food we get to sit together and eat together. So, we're having good conversations, and forming relationships with people in the community who need help and those who provide help. And we are trying to minister to both."

"One of the more difficult things about this type of venture, though, is moving it from being friendly to having good conversations about faith. I don't see a great necessity to rush that. I see this more as a marathon than a sprint. People are coming back, week after week, so we can have those conversations over a longer period."

Last year BSCA ran a Hope Explored course, and an 87-year-old man was saved. Steve says:

"We are all links in a chain and if you take out one link, the chain breaks. It's about doing it gradually. It's hard work and it is a long job, but we are getting opportunities."



Steve says that recently he spent twenty minutes talking about death to one of the professionals he works alongside. He told her that although he was there at his birth, he doesn't remember it, but he told her:

"I am going to enjoy the dying bit because if you know what you are going to, the transition bit isn't anything to worry about. I think it's going to be brilliant."

"Then she said: 'I have never heard anything like this before. It's completely different.' And I said: 'That's what Christianity is – completely different.'"

"We sat there for ages having this conversation, but I would never have met her if it wasn't for the air fryer course, and we would never have had the conversation had she not felt loved and cared for even as a professional."

For more information about Neighbourhood Chaplaincy see our website:



**counties-training.org/
neighbourhood-chaplains** or
contact Sue Ashmole a
sue.ashmole@countiesuk.org



DAVE JORDAN, SAID: CHRISTIANITY WAS "NOT FOR ME."

Former building consultant, Dave Jordan, said Christianity was "not for me" even though his wife Nancy had been praying for him for over 35 years. Little did he know that an invite by Counties Connector, Simon Ladd, to see their newly renovated 1840s chapel, would change his life.

In the early hours of 7 June this year, Dave Jordan was wide awake and reached for his Bible – his 'go-to' over the past year whenever he had a free moment. Dave wasn't a Christian, but, at that very moment, he thought:

"I can't deny this anymore. So, I decided I would pray to the Lord and ask for forgiveness and commit my life to the lord."

Dave's wife, Nancy, has been a Christian all her life, but he didn't tell her until the next day when they were sitting in a supermarket café about to do their weekly shopping.

"I have never seen anybody's face change so much. She was so excited. I have never seen anybody shop so quickly in my life. She wanted to get back and phone everybody who had been praying for me over the years."

One of those people was Counties Senior Evangelist, Victor Jack, who Dave has known for over twenty years and with whom he occasionally plays golf.

"Victor's not one to miss a chance and would always try and talk about the

Lord; but I would put my hand up and say: 'Not for me.' And when I told him I had committed my life to the Lord, he was overjoyed, he said: 'Well it's definitely for you now isn't it?' And I said: '100 percent.'"

When Dave looks back on his journey, he calls it a "long and laborious one" but it's clear to him that God's hand has been at work in his life – even if he couldn't see it.

Dave has been married to Nancy for 35 years and so he has been surrounded by Christians nearly all his life. Nancy has muscular dystrophy and is in a wheelchair but, Dave says, in all this time he has never seen her lose her faith for one moment.

In addition, Nancy hosted home groups and Bible studies at their house and, although Dave says he would happily make people a cup of tea and welcome them in, he wasn't interested in anything they had to say.

But in 2023, Simon Ladd, Counties Connector, and his wife Belinda – who've known Dave and Nancy for more than twenty

years – came to tell them about the restorations to Brockley Chapel in Suffolk, where Simon is the minister. It was built in 1840 straight onto the dirt without any foundations.

"They had been doing it up and I was a building consultant and so was interested to see how this thing was still standing after all this time, and it really got my interest. So, I agreed to go to church at Easter 2023 when they re-opened it, just to see the church."

"I walked in, and I don't know what it was, but everyone was so warm and kind – just amazing."

"I walked in, and I don't know what it was, but everyone was so warm and kind – just amazing. I felt great just being there and that started me thinking. Then Nancy bought me an ESV Bible and the more I read, the more I started to understand. Everything Jesus said was printed in red – so I couldn't miss any of that."



It was after over a year of reading and attending church that Dave finally gave his life to the Lord.

By his own admission, Dave is now a totally different person:

"I didn't go into all the research to disprove anything, but I wanted to prove it to myself. The more you read the Bible it becomes clear that Jesus is who he says he is. There are 2000 years of history. The more I read, the more I understood the 'message'

of what was trying to be conveyed.

"When you put that together with the warmth and love that was shown to me when I walked into the church and being surrounded by lovely Christians all my life, it made me think: 'This is how I want to live my life. I want to live the way Jesus wants us to live.'"

By his own admission, Dave is now a totally different person:

"I have committed and committed wholeheartedly. I am changing as a person. I used to drink a lot, but

now I don't. I am calmer. I used to have a hair trigger fuse, and I don't anymore. I don't want to react. The people who know me are amazed that I am Christian. It's the first thing I talk about when I meet people."

Dave is like a spiritual sponge – soaking up everything God has to offer. He's reading his way through the Bible and admits he gets frustrated that he can't yet quote passages from it directly, but he's determined it won't be long before he does.

"I really do enjoy reading the Bible, and I mean

that; I love reading it. But it's funny to think that for years we have had all these Bibles and books about Christianity in our small study and I've never picked any of them up. But I am doing it now."

Dave has also seen prayer in action. He has had two full knee replacements in the last two years and has suffered with both. He had his left knee operated on and after nine months the swelling hadn't receded so, he could hardly bend it.

Dave went back to see his consultant who suggested that the only solution would be to drain the fluid from his knee. Three weeks later he and Nancy attended Garland Street Church (Brockley Chapel has a service there every other week). Dave was wearing his shorts and struggling to sit down and stand up during the service. This prompted a man next to him, called Mac, to offer to pray out loud with Dave – and he did.

About two weeks later Dave noticed his knee was getting easier and when he went to see the consultant, to fix a date to get his knee drained, the

doctor said: "It's strange. A lot of it has gone." Dave now says his left knee is nearly the same size as his right knee.

"I went through ten months of pain and now I hardly have any. The swelling has disappeared. The scar which was nine inches long on the left knee has nearly disappeared too. When I sat down with the consultant I said: 'It's the work of the Lord.' And I told him what had happened. He replied: 'That's amazing. I'll take that.'"

The miracle didn't end there. Because Dave phoned Mac and told him what had happened, and

"The power of prayer is incredible," adds Dave. "I wish I had done this years ago because I would have had a better life."

Mac was in tears. He said: "I have always wanted to do something like that, but I have never had the courage to do it. You have made my year."

"The power of prayer is incredible," adds Dave. "I wish I had done this years ago because I would have had a better life. Now I want to become as much like Jesus as I can."

Dave has recently been baptised.



Dave with Simon Ladd and Tim, another leader at Brockley

AN INFLATABLE HOT TUB

was the unlikely place for several baptisms at Emmanuel Christian Fellowship – Ilford which is a Tamil speaking church. But God is at work in the lives of many diaspora communities in Essex. Rachel Rounds talks to Counties Evangelist, Charles Addoco.



Emmanuel Christian Fellowship – Ilford – has a congregation of around 120 people from South India and Sri Lanka. The word Tamil is familiar from the phrase “Tamil Tigers”. They fought a civil war in Sri Lanka, against the government, from 1983 to 2009 in which around 100,000 people died. Today the largest population of British Sri Lankan Tamils is in London, so the congregation is focused on mission to their fellow Tamil speakers in the area.

The church defines itself as a mission church – it reaches out through door-to-door visits and street preaching, but often Tamil-speaking people find the church themselves. The church also visits Sri Lanka to serve others: “especially those involved in the war,” Charles says. “They go with a doctor who treats people, particularly those whose legs had to be amputated because of land mines used in great numbers during the civil war.”

Charles is the youth pastor of ECF as many second-generation Tamils don’t speak the language.

“This is where I come in. I lead that side of the church. We do online prayers and our normal Sunday service. We encourage

young people to bring their friends, and we have an event called the five ‘Fs’: fun, friendship, food, faith, and fellowship.

“Five people were recently baptised at the church. Two had come from India and two others had grown up in the church. Finally, one of the surgeons travelling to India with the church also got baptised – after being a Christian for thirty years.”

Charles is also an Elder at Christ’s Forgiveness Ministries which is attracting people from all over: particularly Poland and Africa. It is a multicultural church largely made up of new Christians. Many Polish young people have come from Catholic backgrounds and have been born again recently. It’s a very outward focused church that focuses on growing disciples and planting churches. They recently teamed up with Barking Churches Unite – which works with the local community – and approached them as it wanted to engage with more young people.

“We have four disciple groups and all those attending have been Christians for less than three years. One girl is from a Muslim background, and another is from a ‘new age’ background.

“Two were baptised recently. I prepared them for baptism along with another brother, but we didn’t have anything in which to baptise them. So, I phoned Martin Erwin, and it turned out he no longer needed the family’s inflatable hot tub. He had been going to sell it but what better use for a hot tub than using it so a Christian can publicly commit their life to Christ!”

Charles is a mentor to its pastor, Jeremiah Oke, and both have a heart for

young people. Recently 19 people took their first mission trip to Athens – four families and six individuals. They worked alongside three Christian organizations and two churches in the centre of Athens.

“We had the opportunity of working with a homeless group at the harbour city of Piraeus,” says Charles.

“The new believers among the group had the opportunity to share their faith with a group of young people and some had the opportunity of leading devotions. One of the mothers felt the Lord is calling her into mission and has since arranged for the next mission to be in Poland which is her homeland.”

But whether here or abroad Charles says:

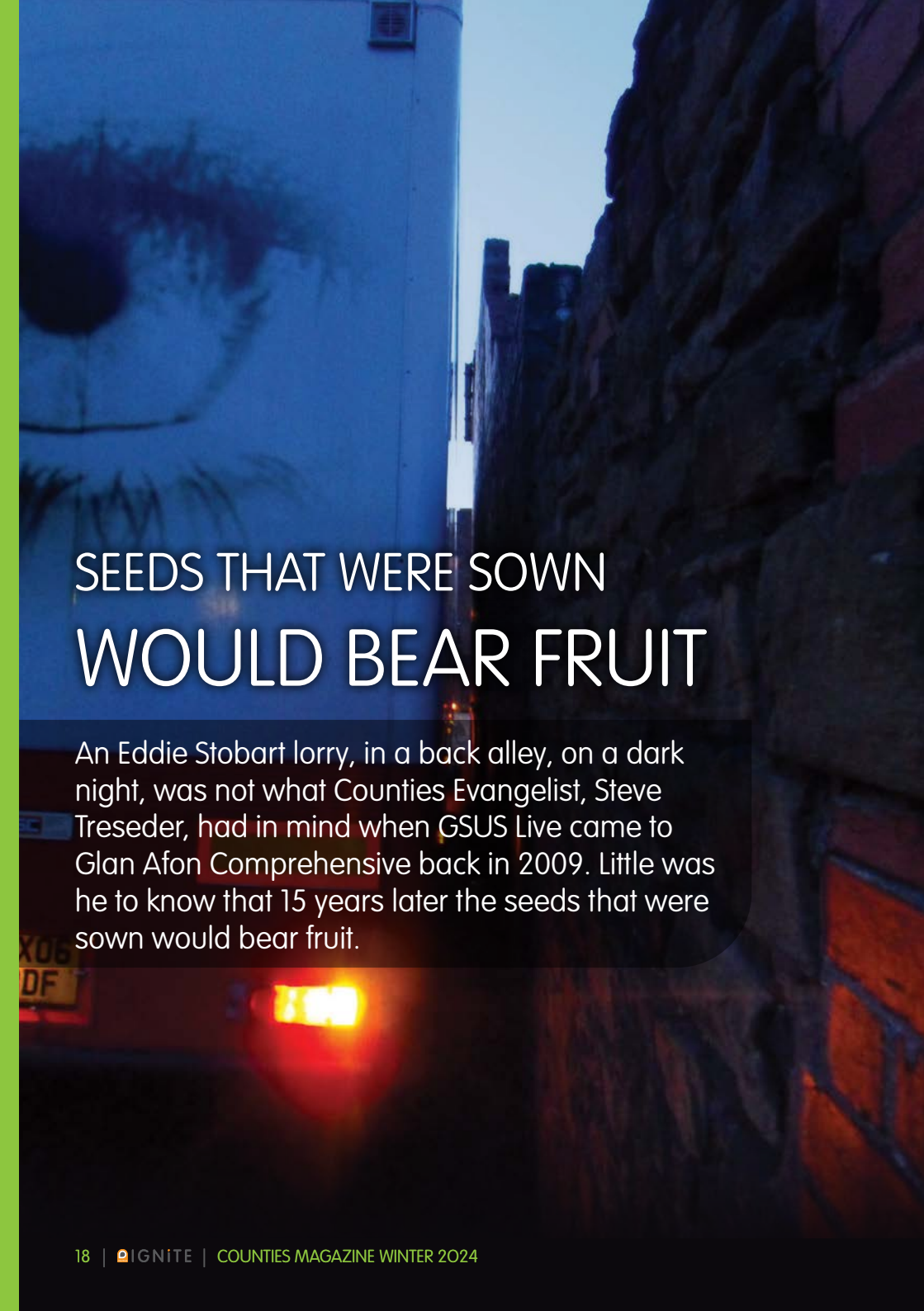
“My vision for the church’s young people is that they become leaders, that we have more disciples, that they bring their friends to church, I want us to be a missional church more than anything else.”

“The new believers among the group had the opportunity to share their faith with a group of young people

To find out more about how you can become involved in **mission and evangelism** visit **Counties**

Evangelists Training Programme





SEEDS THAT WERE SOWN WOULD BEAR FRUIT

An Eddie Stobart lorry, in a back alley, on a dark night, was not what Counties Evangelist, Steve Treseder, had in mind when GSUS Live came to Glan Afon Comprehensive back in 2009. Little was he to know that 15 years later the seeds that were sown would bear fruit.

During August, Gwyneth and I were sitting on the Aberavon seafront at 'Church on the Beach' – an open-air service that a local church had arranged. As part of the service, a young man in his late twenties told how he had come to know Jesus as his Saviour.

In his teens, he had been an atheist because: *"It seemed the right thing to do as everyone else thought that way."* One day in school he was presented with a Gideon New Testament which he received with disdain, as he considered the Bible to be a collection of fairy tales.

A short time afterward Counties' GSUS Live schools resource visited his school, and he started thinking: *"There might be something in this."* Following this he read the testament: *"To see what these stupid Christians believed".*

Reading through John's gospel, though, he realised that Jesus was a real person and had something to offer his life. Just a little later, Neil Tallamy, the pastor of Baglan

Community Church came to the school and held a seminar on: 'Who was Jesus?'

This young man is now an active follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. He attended Glan Afon Comprehensive. It closed and re-opened as Bae Baglan School, so it was the only time GSUS Live visited there, and I can vividly remember the experience we had with the Eddie Stobart trailer that previously delivered GSUS Live.

The access to the school with the 45-foot lorry was impossible, but that day we had a superb driver called Dave. He arrived, took one look at the entrance to the school, and said: *"There's no way I can get this thing in there."*

The entrance to the alleyway was so sharp he didn't have the room to jack-knife it around. He drove around the town for a bit and decided the only way he could get the lorry



into the school was to drive down to the far end of Port Talbot and reverse down a back alley – about 750 feet long, across the main road and into the school's entrance.

Reading through John's gospel, though, he realised that Jesus was a real person and had something to offer his life.

By now it was starting to get dark, but he reversed all the way and once he got nearer the school there were literally inches on either side. In fact, he had to pull in his wing mirrors and rely on three



of us shouting: “Left a bit”, “Right a bit”, “Straight” and “Stop!” as this huge lorry crept along inch by inch.



All the time that the lorry was backing in I was thinking: “Is he going to do it?” “Is it worth the trouble?” The answer – although I didn’t know it

at the time – was “yes”. It was all part of God’s amazing plan and, looking back, it’s fantastic seeing how God was using it all for His purposes.

GSUS Live has been wonderfully used over the years. There are so many instances where I can see God’s hand working in amazing ways.

In 2007 we visited Sandfields Comprehensive School, about two miles away from Glan Afon and, that time, yet again, we had problems; this time, with our generator’s electrics.

However, that week, a girl in the school, Claire, had gone into hospital and, heartbreakingly, had passed away. The whole school was absolutely reeling because one of their classmates and friends had just unexpectedly died.

Claire is also the name of the girl in one of the stories in GSUS Live who goes into hospital because she is ill. I thought: “What a parallel.”

During that week, Claire’s boyfriend visited GSUS Live and went through the programme with us, and

he chose the character of Claire (there are three characters to choose from) and he just sat silently. We don’t know what was going on in his head, but we saw it as a God moment. Was it a coincidence? No, I don’t think so.

One of the local Christians who’d been there that day got in touch with the young people who’d been there and there was an effective follow-up in the school.

Because that often happens through the different churches; GSUS Live has become a way of establishing and developing contacts.

I think this is key because often we look at these things as a short term event – we share what Christians believe with X hundred children and go away and that’s it. But for

it to be effective, it must be much more than that.

The other great thing about GSUS Live is that although it’s working with teenagers, who are notoriously difficult to please (ask any parent), it works. When the students entered the GSUS Live classroom environment, there was a real ‘wow’ factor. The programme is extremely well designed. It speaks to them on their level and talks about real issues that they are experiencing – whether it’s rejection, fear, or forgiveness.

And the characters they meet in the programme are their peers. The Bible stories are easy to listen to and the music is great. They don’t feel they are being preached at and it’s interactive so they can give their opinion, even though it’s a prompted

opinion. It’s something they can really feel part of.

GSUS Live is a sowing ministry. It’s planting seeds in many; many hearts and they are links in a chain. We know of others who have come to faith, and GSUS Live has been part of that walk. I think most people come to faith in a series of steps.

GSUS Live is a sowing ministry. It’s planting seeds in many; many hearts and they are links in a chain.

Someone once said to me: “What you do today, maybe one step in bringing somebody to Christ tomorrow.” It’s rarely the last step of coming to faith, but it takes people one step further. That’s what makes it so valuable.

God is working in the lives of young people through GSUS Live and the Life exhibition throughout each school term - up and down the county. Please continue to pray and support its work. If you would like to know more, visit our website countiesuk.org/gsuslive where we have a brand-new video explaining all about GSUS Live.



GOD'S BLESSING THE COMMUNITY

A Sainsbury's carpark in Herefordshire seems an unlikely place for a congregation to grow from seven to over 30 – but with enthusiasm and hard work – God's blessing the community. Counties Evangelist, Tim Cracknell, takes up the story.

The Gospel Hall in Ross-on-Wye had been in numerical decline for several decades with only one baptism this century.

Seven years ago, the elders engaged in discussions with Counties CEO, Martin Erwin, and Tim Cracknell, with a view to invite them to help bring change to the church and start a new chapter. Part of the arrangement was for the growing Community Church in nearby Cinderford to supply support and leadership in cooperation with Counties to bring about this process.

Things were starting to move forward steadily and then Covid came along and almost derailed everything, leaving only seven people in attendance on Sundays.

Since then, a new nucleus of people has been drawn together in Ross to kick-start

the church again with a more hands-on approach given by the Community Church in Cinderford. This has gathered more momentum in the intervening three years with regular attendance on Sundays rising to around thirty.

The building sits on a plum site, right in the middle of a Sainsbury's car park with considerable footfall passing by its doors each day. However, apart from a new kitchen built several years ago, the building has not had any money spent on it since it was refurbished 50 years ago.

To make the most of its location and to make the place attractive for a new younger generation of worshippers, considerable work was needed to refurbish the building. Whilst this work was carried out it would not be possible to use the main hall.

One of the issues we discovered about the church was that despite its attractive location, very few people in the town knew the church existed. So, the leadership decided to do an official relaunch of the Community Church once the main refurbishments were complete, to raise the banner and reach out to the community.

15,000 leaflets were distributed. There was a lot of social media shares, new signage was put up on the church, four-metre flags decked the entrance, and word of mouth spread the news of the launch day.

A week before the launch a lot of work was still to be done to get the building ready. An army of volunteers from the church in Ross and Cinderford joined the wonderful Brass-Tacks team, to paint and clean the church in a very busy week.

By Sunday morning a transformation had taken place both in the building and the congregation. 30 minutes before the service was due to start, a real buzz was going around the church hall as the seats filled up quickly.

Double the normal congregation showed up, including several people who described themselves as "seekers" or had unchurched connections, built up via community outreach.

During the service, we were able to link live with the church in Cinderford and do part of the service from each place, seeing each other on the big screens via the wonders of the internet. It truly was a very special occasion marking the beginning of a new chapter which we believe God will use mightily to build his kingdom.

We now have a building that is fit for modern-day worship and by raising our banner quite literally, Ross-on-Wye knows that there is a church that meets in the middle of the Sainsbury's car park to worship the living God.

Oh, and by the way we also have our first request for baptism. A young man who has come to faith in Christ recently in the church. Exciting times. How we praise the Lord!

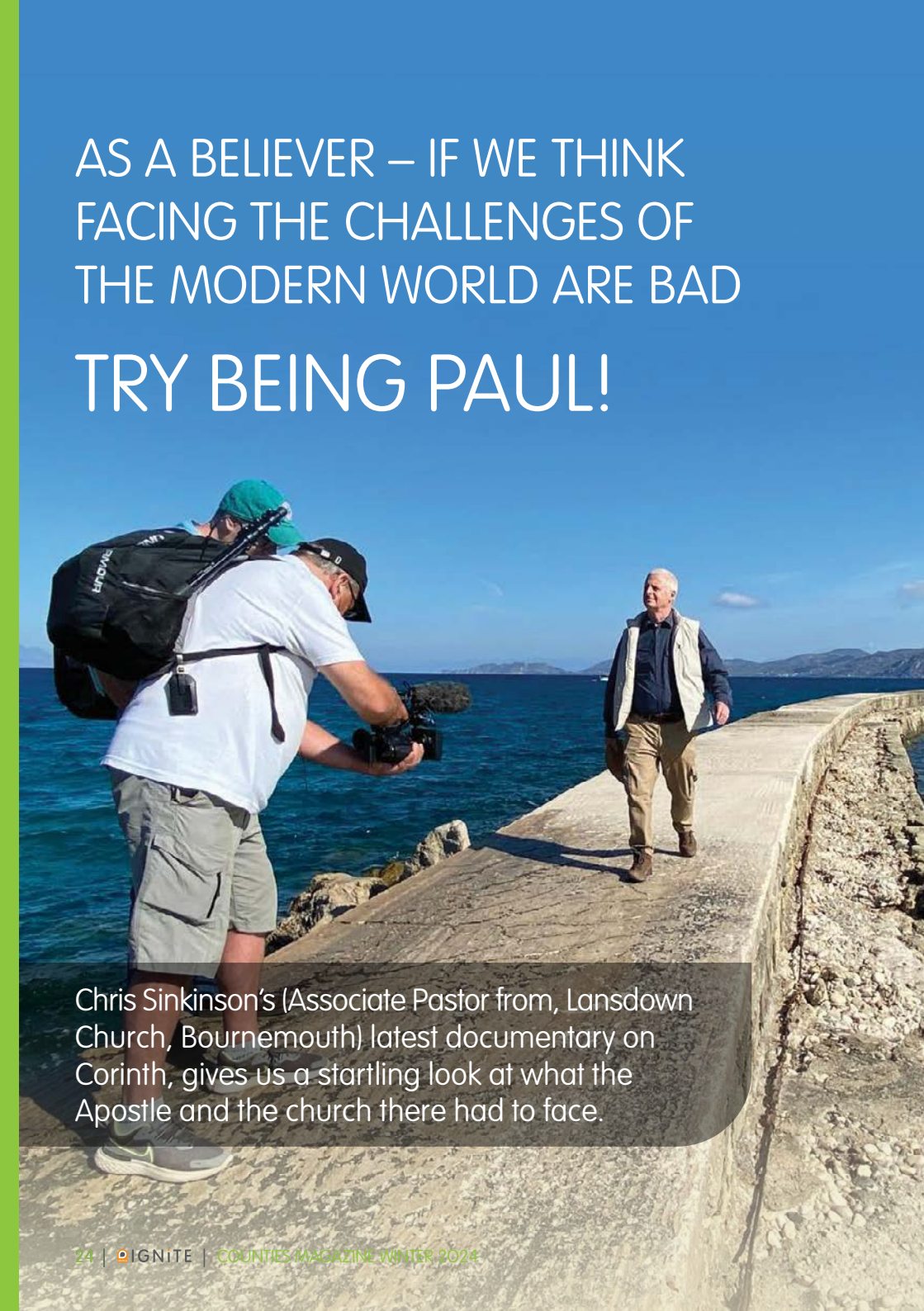


Could Counties help you with church revitalisation?



Visit:
counties-training.org/church-revitalisation

AS A BELIEVER – IF WE THINK FACING THE CHALLENGES OF THE MODERN WORLD ARE BAD TRY BEING PAUL!



Chris Sinkinson's (Associate Pastor from, Lansdown Church, Bournemouth) latest documentary on Corinth, gives us a startling look at what the Apostle and the church there had to face.

When you train to be a pastor or evangelist, you may not have expected to be dealing with issues of transgender, pornography addiction and Christians falling out over climate change. But that is the messy world we live in and when we read the Bible with that background in mind, we find this messiness is not so new. I have the feeling the Apostle Paul would have been right at home dealing with the murk and mayhem of the modern world.

I have had a lifelong interest in archaeology. I love to try and understand the ancient world – what they thought, how they lived, what they did. You might think that interest is all about escaping the present but the more I research the more I am reminded how understanding the past helps us a great deal to understand the present. A recent trip to Corinth brought this home to me. And it reminded me just how relevant to the today's evangelists and ministers are Paul's letters to the Corinthians.

Currently, I am working with the Christian

Television Association in the production of a new film. We previously produced a series on Bible archaeology, *Sifting the Evidence*, and one on the life of Jesus, *Discovering Who is this Jesus?* (Shameless plug: they can all be seen on YouTube). The new film follows the story of Christianity from its origins in the Holy Land, across the Mediterranean and throughout Britain.

We film on location and it's a great story to tell as there are so many archaeological ruins and artefacts that bring it to life. A top destination to really feel the world of the New Testament Church must be Corinth.

Corinth is not the most popular holiday destination, there are Greek islands with better beaches, but as a base to explore the ancient world it is a real treasure trove. The town sits on a narrow strip of the Greek peninsula – only four miles separates the Ionian Sea from the Aegean Sea. This made it a perfect place for a harbour. At that time there wasn't a canal (there is now!) but a portage road had been

created that allowed boats to be dragged overland between the two seas. Remains of this road are still visible today and one of the few things we know about the second harbour at Cenchreae is that Paul got his hair cut there (Acts 18:18). I imagine a cosmopolitan port was a good place for a barber to get business.

It was a big city in the ancient world with up to 90,000 people. The trade would have brought wealth, ideas and culture from all around the classical world. We filmed among the ancient ruins which include an impressive temple, marketplace and government building. From up on a nearby mountain you get a real sense of how the city would have been a magnet for the region, drawing in every kind of grifter and chancer!

Among those who made their way to Corinth was the Apostle Paul. He spent 18 months there (Acts 18), staying at the home of Priscilla and Aquila who themselves had moved from Rome. While church planting, Paul brought in

an income by making tents – giving us that expression “tentmaking” to describe any ministry supported by secular employment.

The two letters to the church in Corinth preserved in our New Testament reveal a great deal about just how tough church planting would have been. Notice in the Corinthian letters, chapter after chapter deal with depravity in the church – lawsuits among believers, incest, idolatry, the influence of mystical religions and abusive leadership. It all fits well with what we know from the ruins – wealth, pluralism and prostitution would be day to day business in an ancient port. Paul was not easily shocked – Corinth was not big by modern standards – pagan priests, public prostitutes and sailors off duty would have been his neighbours. He had to navigate being a friend of sinners (Luke 7:34)

without approving of sinful behaviour (1 Corinthians 5:9-11).

What these ruins tell me is that the gospel is not just for polite society in cathedrals but for the mess and grime of a pagan port. Paul’s mission strategy was to be immersed in the immoral, secular public world. When the religious Jews in Corinth tried to silence Paul he brought his case before the local governor, Gallio (Acts 18:12) who dismissed the case. The very courtroom still stands today.

What impact did Paul have? Clearly the gospel travelled far and wide and a harbour town was a pretty good place to sow seed that would embark on that journey. But in 1920 archaeologists found a significant inscription on a pavement near to the ancient theatre which you can still see today.

The inscription names Erastus as the city treasurer who had managed the public building works. Who was Erastus? The inscription dates to AD 55, around the same time that Paul was based in Corinth.

Erastus is an unusual name but appears three times in the New Testament referring to a friend and co-worker of Paul. He assisted Paul in mission and was probably a man of means. In Romans 16:23 Paul sends greetings from Corinth in which he includes Erastus, “the treasurer of the city.” The last reference to Erastus comes at the end of Paul’s life, c. 67 AD, where we are told that Erastus had remained in Corinth (2 Timothy 4:20), suggesting he was a faithful believer who had continued to serve in this great city.

The title given to Erastus in the Corinth inscription



tells us he had a role in managing the city finance. Putting together the inscription with the New Testament references, we can say that Erastus settled in Corinth and served in the local church. But he also used his financial skills to serve in public life. He gained promotion, earned money, and, years later, had a significant role in local government and contributed to public life.

What a reminder that simple inscription is of the impact the gospel can have. If we think London or Liverpool are bad today, be reminded

of Corinth at the time of Paul!

The church was spread and grew in a pagan world. Like William Wilberforce in Britain or William Carey in India, they considered mission to include the reformation of society and being a blessing where we are. Issues we face today regarding sexuality, euthanasia and abortion and are only a shadow of the challenges faced by Christians in ancient Corinth. The testimony of the early church reminds us that our primary calling is to be faithful to God, and trust that his word and the Gospel have

power to transform.

Erastus served as salt and light in the public world. No doubt he struggled with the same dangers of compromise as Christians still do in secular and public life. Probably his challenges were even worse when we consider how pagan Corinth was. But the remains of that two-thousand-year-old inscription can be taken as an encouragement to continue to: “seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you” (Jeremiah 29:7) and leave evidence of the Gospel wherever we have been placed.



Watch the videos here:



*Jesus, Discovering
Who is this Jesus?*

(Scan to watch)



*Sifting the
Evidence: The
World of the Bible*

(Scan to watch)

MARANATHA HOUSE CHURCH

Counties Evangelist Jonathan Brain and his wife Heather set up Maranatha House Church, near Chippenham, in Wiltshire, back in January. Ignite has been following its progress.



Jonathan, how's it going?

It's exciting. We have about five young men in their twenties and about five women, but not everyone comes along each time.

Earlier today I was thinking: *"Lord, what am I meant to do?"* And He said: *"Nothing. Leave it to Me."* And with that, someone messaged me and said: *"I'm really interested in church, can I come along to yours? I don't believe, but I am curious, and I have some questions."*

So, the Lord is building it up in His way. We have a good number coming at the moment, but I don't want it to get larger

than our living room, I don't want to stop it being a house church! I really believe in this principle and think it's biblically sound.

Remind us of the format.

We have a Sunday night service at our house, every other week. Then on alternate weeks, we have a prayer meeting on a Monday night. On Sunday mornings, we do a Facebook live service which lasts exactly an hour (with a countdown timer!) and that's more like a traditional service with a short message, communion, prayers, songs, and Bible readings. We have been doing this part for the longest period – we're on episode 224 now. We have a WhatsApp group where we often get prayer requests, I go out for coffee with people, and we meet up outside our 'church' settings.

You mentioned in our last chat that Jerry Shirazian wanted to get baptised – did that happen?

(See Spring 2023 & Summer 2024 for Jerry's full story.)

He was baptised. It was wonderful. He's asking lots



of questions. He's wrestling with lots of things but is going in the right direction. He's reading lots of Scripture and watching lots of videos.

Jerry came to his old school with me, last week. He had been such a tearaway, and his teacher remembered him, but he was able to apologise, and his testimony really rocked. We put a picture up of him being baptised and the kids asked lots of questions. He did a great job of answering their questions – it had a big effect on the pupils and the teachers.



His ongoing sanctification is wonderful and there are one or two of his contemporaries that will probably end up being baptised.

We are seeing a lot of young men coming to Maranatha, which is unusual as it's usually young women. Jerry is witnessing to people, and he's learned from me to take no prisoners!

What have you and Heather learned as a couple leading the church?

The main thing is that we really can leave it up to the Lord to build His church in

the way that He wants to build it in His time and with His structure.

It's interesting, for example, that people tend to sit in the same chairs every week. So, we've tried to mix them around. We are creatures of habit: *"Well, we sang at this time last week so aren't we doing that again?"* We are trying not to let moss grow on the rocks.

As evangelists you want to crack on, but we are learning to 'wait' on God. Our saying on the wall at home is to: *"Pray, wait, walk."*

What are the pros and cons of a small church versus a larger one?

Keeping tabs on 15-20 people is so much easier than keeping tabs on 100-200 people. It's so much more of a family. You can really get to know people thoroughly, like your mum or dad or your siblings. The Lord said: *"I will build my church."* And often as pastors, we ignore that and try to do it ourselves – but I think I prefer the Lord to do it than me.

I can't think of any cons. I miss the buzz of the big 'singsong' but now, for us, there really are only positives.

Are you considering a church plant and would like to find out more:



'WE ARE LED TO THE SLAUGHTER, AND WE REJOICE!'

Counties Senior Evangelist Roger Chilvers examines what it means to be a martyr for Christ through the life of one little-known woman who followed Jesus.

Don't let it put you off but there is a cost to being a witness! It is well known that the New Testament word 'witness' is the Greek word 'martyr'. To be a witness is to be a martyr, and, far from martyrdom being for a select few especially committed and bold believers, it is the calling for us all.

It is a willingness to pay the price for sharing the truth we have seen and experienced. We rarely translate the word 'witnesses' in Acts 1:8 as Jesus saying: "... you will be

my martyrs in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." But that is what he said.

We usually think of martyrdom 'in extremis', maybe even paying the ultimate price of dying for Christ, which is intended by persecutors to instil fear into would-be followers and halt the growth of the church. But instead of crushing the church, so often Christ's followers who confirmed their witness in their blood, consciously or

unconsciously were laying the foundation for radical growth. As church father Tertullian said concerning the persecutions around the second century:

"The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church".

Two centuries later Saint Augustine pointed out:

"The martyrs were bound, imprisoned, scourged, racked, burnt, rent, butchered—and they multiplied."

But when faced with severe opposition in our witness it is easy to push

willingness to die for Christ as being what martyrdom is all about when, for most believers, the cost of being a martyr may be far more subtle though none the less costly.

Take, as an example, Luke's record of Herod Antipas, part of the infamous Herod dynasty, and his hatred of Jesus and his followers. Even the Pharisees went to Jesus to tell him:

"Herod wants to kill you."
Luke 13:31

This was the Herod who presided over one of the trials of Jesus having earlier had John the Baptist put to death. Luke's account of his opposition to Jesus tells us facts not seen on the surface of the record. He tells us:

"When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had long desired to see him, because he had heard about him, and he was hoping to see some sign done by him."
Luke 23:8

And he records that at the time of Jesus' trial:

"Herod with his soldiers treated him with

contempt and mocked him. Then, arraying him in splendid clothing, he sent him back to Pilate."
Luke 23:11

Maybe his sensual conscience was leading to a personal internal crisis following his call for the execution (martyrdom) of John the Baptist, who openly accused him of living in an adulterous relationship with his brother's wife. But the question that arises is, how did Luke know this?

When he carefully researched and presented his 'orderly account' (Luke 1:3) where, and how, did he get this inside information about what went on in the court and mind of Herod? After all, none of the disciples were present to keep a record and report back.

But there was, no doubt one there who did have the responsibility to record everything; Chuza, who Luke tells us was Herod's 'household manager' or steward, perhaps equivalent to Chief of Staff in a modern household government set-up.

Though we are not specifically told this, it

was most probably he, who arranged the trial of Jesus to take place when Herod was in Jerusalem to control things during the Jewish Passover. In his official role, Chuza would be familiar not only with all the details of what took place during the trial but being very close to Herod, he would be aware of his feelings and opinions.

Yet, the question remains, how did Luke find out? Who told him? The answer almost certainly, is that he was informed by Chuza's wife, Joanna.

We know that Joanna was a follower of Jesus and, being a wealthy influential woman, she, along with others, financially supported Jesus and travelled with him (Luke 8:1-3).

Being well placed from a political viewpoint, and close to the disciples, more than likely she would be one that Luke interviewed to gather information when he wrote his 'orderly account' for the 'most excellent Theophilus.' Luke 1:4

What we are not told, but can imagine, is something of the discussions that in

all likelihood took place around the meal table in the house of Chuza and Joanna when Jesus' trial was underway.

She was a follower of Jesus; he was Herod's right-hand man in the trial. To stand for Jesus as a witness in such circumstances would surely take outstanding courage and a willingness to pay whatever price was demanded for being a follower of the man accused and on trial for sedition.

It was not just that she knew and associated with some of Jesus' disciples, which would be quite enough for her life to be threatened, but that she herself was actually one of Jesus' personal followers, a truly scandalous thing for a woman in those days. She travelled with him, financing him and his disciples, and here he was on trial. Her extraordinary boldness is indeed the spirit of a willing martyr.

This is such a contrast to most of us today in our comfortable pluralistic culture. So often today, we find it hard to be a bold witness, even to

simply speak to a friend or neighbour about Jesus. We are fearful of what the reaction may be. Will our friendship be broken? What will they think of me?

However, Joanna's story does not end around her supposed discussions at the meal table with Chuza. Is it taking speculation too far to wonder whether it was the witness of Joanna within the family and household of Herod that led to Herod's foster brother Manaen becoming a believer?

Luke records that he was not only a Christian disciple but also one of the prophets and teachers in the Antioch church, one of the most influential churches in the New Testament (Acts 13:1).

The last information we have concerning this astonishing witness of Joanna is of her faithfulness to the end. She was one of the women who, very early in the morning: "... went to the tomb, [of Jesus] taking the spices they had prepared" (Luke 24:1) and then falling at the feet of the angels were



Joanna and the Head of John the Baptist

By school of tsar's izagrophs, Public Domain, via WikiCommons

told, "He is not here; but has risen" (v 6). She then had the task of being an excited but willing witness once more, along with the other women telling this extraordinarily good news to the sceptical disciples (v 9).

... then falling at the feet of the angels were told, "He is not here; but has risen"

Added to that, who knows what the discussion around the dinner table that night was when Chuza's wife returned home.

JUST A MINUTE

with Neighbourhood Chaplains
Co-ordinator, Sue Ashmole.



How did you become a Christian?

I was asked to look after a friend's pets whilst she was at Creation Fest, and I found this little book called: 'Why Jesus?' And it just made sense. She still says, to this day, that she didn't leave the book out – so gotta be God.

She then introduced me to her pastor, and I thought: "Woah, I don't know what it is about you but whatever it is, I want it."

Then, I went on a Discovery Course, I did an apprenticeship, and then I went on mission to Ukraine. But it changed my life as I gave it to the Lord.

How did you get involved with Neighbourhood Chaplains?

Our NC team started in 2017, one of the first few. Covid cut it back, as did my business running an Alpaca farm. I then got involved with 'Try Praying' but I felt a bit out of my depth as I hadn't been a Christian very long. So, I called Beverley Bedford (then NC Coordinator) and in October she turned up on my door thinking I wanted to sign up for the Evangelist Training Programme (ETP).

Beverley asked me how I was doing for work and money. I told her: "Not well"

and she said: "I think I might know just the right job for you."

It turns out the day before she had stepped down as NC Coordinator and took on the role as ETP Officer. Had she come the day before, I wouldn't have had this job.

What are the highlights of your time with Neighbourhood Chaplains?

I have just returned from a trip to London. I had prepared a brief message, but everyone before me had prepared a proper 'talk'. Then the guy before gave out the verses I was going to give. So, I prayed: "Lord just let me say what needs to be said."

I have no idea what I said but so many people afterwards said they were blessed; I knew it was God.

What is your favourite Bible passage and why?

During my mission trip to Ukraine, God led me to Jeremiah 29:11-13 and this verse has meant a lot to me ever since.

EVANGELISTS

NORTH OF ENGLAND

- Andy Dykes (RC)
- Steve & Debra Cowles
- Julian & Ella Gutteridge
- Phyllis Jenkins (Senior)
- Martin & Angie Korchinsky (CP)
- Lee & Lesley Marsland
- Matt & Nicola Rich
- Rob & Sarah Watson

MIDLANDS

- Jordan & Lacy Armstrong (CP)
- David & Lindsey Brown
- Roger & Hazel Chilvers (Seniors)
- Angela Cooper (Senior)
- Tim & Katrina Cracknell (CP)
- Andy & Isobel Hodson (CP)
- Simon & Yvonne Terry
- Bob & Rita Telford (Seniors)
- Paul & Vanessa Willmott

EAST OF ENGLAND

- Simon Ladd (RC)
- John Jenkins (RC)
- Charles & Elizabeth Addoco
- Will & Lynne Andrews
- Tim & Joy Ayrton
- Madelene Bathgate (Senior)
- Mark & Amanda Bingham
- Lionel & Katy Clargo (Seniors)
- John Hardwick
- Kim & Jo Hobbs
- Tony & Ruth Hood
- Victor Jack (Senior)
- Andy & Miriam Jelfs (Seniors)
- Colin & Linda Johnson
- Caleb & Adanesh Mathewos (CP)
- Andrew & Rachel Mugford

SOUTH WEST

- Andrew Conlan (RC)
- Jacquie & Tim Bodman
- Jean Campbell (Senior)
- Steve Ellacott
- Mike & Su Strange (Seniors)
- Alex & Beth Symons
- David & Katie Symons
- Stevie & Natalie Walker

SOUTH CENTRAL

- Jonathan & Heather Brain
- Gordon & Penny Curley
- Ray Dadswell (Senior)
- Stephen & Jean Gillham (Seniors)
- Wendy Iliffe (Senior)
- Steve & Dawn Loader

WALES

- Grace Anderson (Senior)
- Clive & Fiona Cornish (CP)
- Paul & Laura Davies
- Phil & Sheila Davies (RC)
- Andy & Belle Goode
- Janet Hawking (Senior)
- Lesley & Andrew Lawrence
- Mike & Jan Thomas
- Steve & Gwyn Treseder (Seniors)

CP – Church Planter

RC – Regional Connector

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