

SPRING 2023

# IGNITE

SPARKING PASSION FOR THE GOSPEL  
ACROSS THE UK



## “WHY ARE WE HERE?”

CONVERSATIONS ABOUT LIFE'S MEANING BETWEEN  
ONE YOUNG MAN & COUNTIES EVANGELIST

ALSO COUNTRIES CONTACTS OPEN THEIR CHURCHES  
AS 'WARM SPACES'

MEET COUNTIES NEW REGIONAL COORDINATORS



# WELCOME TO IGNITE



A friend said to me recently that the Church's greatest need in the UK is to get ordinary Christians talking about Jesus to their family and friends.

Jonathan Brain loves to talk about Jesus, and his developing friendship with Jerry (on page 26) is a great example to us of how things can go if we are bold enough to introduce Christ into the conversation.

Charles Addoco also continues to introduce Christ into the lives of others. I hope you enjoy reading Joanna's story of her journey to faith in Jesus.

Jesus said: "You will be my witnesses." (Acts 1:8). May the Lord help us tell others our story of how life is transformed, even through the tough times, with God in our lives.

May the Lord bless you as you read this edition of Ignite.

**Martin**

## Making Jesus known: inspiring and equipping local churches

Counties (formerly Counties Evangelistic Work) is a Registered Charity No. 264278 and a Company limited by guarantee registered in England & Wales No. 1041761  
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 Thank you for your valued partnership. We are glad to make Ignite available free of charge. It costs approximately £5 per year to produce and distribute this newsletter to you. Every additional contribution will help us continue in our mission.  
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# NEWS IN BRIEF

## YOUR LETTERS AND COMMENTS

We're excited to announce that in our next edition of Ignite, Summer 2023, we will be including a "Your Letters and Comments" page.

And we'd love to hear from you about the articles you have read in Ignite: what has blessed or encouraged you; articles that you have found informative and intriguing.



Please email Rachel Rounds at: [communications@countiesuk.org](mailto:communications@countiesuk.org)

or write to Rachel at:  
**Counties, 30 Haynes Road,  
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We can't promise to feature or reply to every letter, but we will certainly read them all.

## COUNTIES MAKES THE NEWS

Counties people and Neighbourhood Chaplains have been making the news - talking to the media about why they've been opening up their churches as 'Warm Spaces' for people suffering from the cost-of-living crisis.

Martin Korchinsky who is a Counties Evangelist and Neighbourhood Chaplain in Stockport featured on Sky News. He told their reporter:

*"We want to look after each other as a community. Some people are going to get left out. Some people are going to end up on the wrong side of poverty and of hunger."*

Helen Eadie, a Neighbourhood Chaplain in Stockport, appeared on Hits Radio and local TV news.

Mike Thomas, a Counties Associate Evangelist in Cardiff, was live on Good Morning Britain, Capital Radio and LBC.

You'll find the full story on pages 16-19.



Counties conference 2022

## COUNTIES CONFERENCE 2023 SAVE THE DATE

Counties exists to 'make Jesus known, inspiring and equipping local churches,' and Counties Connect 2023 will be a key conference for Christians and Church leaders as we seek to take the Great Commission seriously in our generation.

**The Counties Connect 2023 conference will be at Staverton Park Hotel, Daventry from 27-29 October.**

- With streams and workshops for church leaders, youth workers, community outreach and much more
- Bible Teaching and times of worship
- One2Lead stream for young people
- Programme for young people

There will be more details in Summer's Ignite. Please save the date.



## GLADYS WHITTERN

Gladys went home to be with her Saviour on 19 Nov 2022 aged 98. Along with her husband Reg, they had served the Lord in Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire since the 1950s. Gladys continued to give Bibles and Christian literature to her carers at the residential home right up to the end. Praise God for a life lived for Jesus and the Gospel.

# THE COUNTIES SUPPORT TEAM HAS EXPANDED

We're excited to see our support team grow, as we seek to follow God's path for Counties as an organisation, in some of the key areas it represents.

## SUE ASHMOLE IS THE PART-TIME COUNTIES NEIGHBOURHOOD CHAPLAINS COORDINATOR

Sue's new role will involve networking with Counties partners and helping Neighbourhood Chaplains grow and develop. She'll help promote Neighbourhood Chaplains through various different outlets and channels. She will also manage the training and coordination aspect of the scheme.

Sue says:

*"My vision for the Neighbourhood Chaplains is that it will be used by more and more churches across the country and that it will be replicated and expand so much that it becomes an everyday*



*term, and that people will recognise what Neighbourhood Chaplains are about."*

Having been a member of Grosvenor Church Torrington since 2016, where she was baptised in 2017, Sue is keen to see the church grow and become embedded as part of the local community.

Sue's life motto is:

**Love God, love life and love unconditionally**



## ANDY MUGFORD HAS TAKEN UP THE ROLE OF EVANGELISTS OFFICER

Andy Mugford joined Counties as an evangelist in January 2015 having been a teacher and, latterly, a Deputy Headteacher in secondary education.

*"I see the role as offering both pastoral and strategic support for fellow evangelists. As a Cluster Leader for the Counties Evangelists who are based in Eastern England, I am aware of some of the personal and ministry-based challenges that evangelists face – including loneliness.*

*"I hope I can offer much more than being just 'someone to run a biannual review meeting'.*

*"I am looking forward to working with other Cluster leaders to make these times even more effective in investing in evangelists.*

***"I have always valued the support of their own Counties Link Group – a small group of friends and church leaders who support them.***

*"Part of the role of the Evangelist's Officer will include developing stronger links with these Counties Links Groups for each evangelist across the UK."*

## JAMES HYDE HAS THE NEW ROLE OF SYSTEMS PROJECT MANAGER

Before taking up this role full time, James served as an Elder at Grosvenor Church, in Barnstaple, Devon, for about 25 years.

*"I will be reviewing, creating, and implementing policies and procedures so Counties can grow its ability to accomplish God's vision with the resources, funds, leaders and volunteers currently available.*

*"I will be available to project manage most of the big events, key programmes and capital projects across all Counties activities."*



## IN HER FINAL ARTICLE LOOKING AT COUNTIES' SCHOOLS RESOURCES IGNITE'S EDITOR, RACHEL ROUNDS VISITS KEY TO LIFE

**After spending the most amazing time with GSUS Live and the Life exhibition, I was worried that my visit to Key to Life wouldn't live up to brilliance of the other two resources or that I would run out of superlatives to describe the experience.**

Well, I certainly wasn't disappointed, but to describe my time onboard Key to Life as 'amazing' or 'brilliant' wouldn't really do it justice. If I could sum it up – the words 'emotive' and 'thought-provoking' would be closer.

I visited the unit at Marden Vale CofE Academy in Calne, where I live. When I arrived, the school was warm and welcoming. The pupils were well-behaved, polite, happy and engaged, with a tangible desire to learn.

I was met by The Bridge Youth Project's Rob Jackson, who is the Chaplain in four Diocese of Salisbury Academy Trust (DSAT) primary schools, called 'The Thrive Hub'.

In addition to Marden Vale, Key to Life was also visiting local schools: Southbroom St James Academy, Devizes; Trinity CE Academy, Devizes; and St Bartholomew's Academy, Royal Wootton Bassett - with nearly 1000 children having time on board.

The unit itself is a little like Dr Who's Tardis – from the outside, it looks quite small and I really wondered how it would hold 10 children, let alone the 30 we were expecting. But once inside it is deceptively spacious – yet still intimate.



Once the children arrived and sat down, crossed legged on cushions, Rob explained they could touch the three walls as they were interactive. The children were Year 6 (age 10/11) and they were blown away and so excited to see what interacting with the walls, which had a Bethlehem backdrop, could do as they tried to create as many stars as possible before time ran out.

After a few minutes of total chaos creating a digital galaxy of stars, the children settled down and concentrated on a timeline which ran from 2000 BC to 2000 AD. This gave Rob a chance to talk about history and geography and firmly to place Christ as a real and historical figure at around 0 AD.

Through the session, I didn't see one child looking bored, they were all totally engaged. As Emma Matthews, Year 6 teacher, says:

*"I hadn't seen it before so I was interested to see how they would link it up to the curriculum. I thought it was really good how they did that with history, geography, so it brought out my historians and we had a few scientists in there. It was respectful of everyone's thoughts."*

*"Rob was linking the story of Jesus, God, the RE curriculum and the whole message coming through from Key to Life to the class in a relevant way to them - about showing respect, care, love for one another, and especially care and love for themselves."*

*"We had two classes together and initially I thought: 'It's going to be bubbly, because they are a lively class and there are some challenges'. However, they were listening and respecting each other's space."*

*"They kept calling out because they were excited and had a lot to share. I really wasn't expecting them to sit there for an hour and a half and take all that in, but they did."*

Rob then went on to explain about the prophets and what had been said about the arrival of Jesus hundreds of years before. This was reinforced with another interactive game – this time matching pairs, where six children were chosen to match up symbols representing: Jesus' birth, His entry into Jerusalem and His death.

### KEY TO LIFE MATCHING PAIRS GAME

*"He will be born in Bethlehem."*  
Micah 4:2

*"He will arrive on a donkey."*  
Zechariah 9:9

*"Nails will be put through his hands and feet."*  
Psalm 22:16



***“It was a wonderful experience of involving children who are sometimes marginalised, so they could learn about Christianity at a level they could manage”.***

*“The interactive side of it meant that they were engaged. Seeing their involvement and enjoyment was wonderful.*

*“Because these children need lots and lots of repetition, we took lots and lots of photographs and now we can go back into the classroom and build on what we have learned in Key to Life.”*

Towards the end of the session Key to Life shows a series of optical illusions such as the famous duck/hare and old/young lady pictures where people either see one or the other, or both. The children found it fascinating.

Emma Matthews and I were still puzzling over the young lady when Rob began to explain that even though you may only see one picture to start with – there are two. This, the children were told, is the same with Jesus’ parables. There is one story with two meanings.

At the teacher’s request, and because he is the school’s Chaplain, Rob used Jesus’ parables to talk about words and how we all use them – for good and bad.

Rob also constantly reminded the children it was good to have opinions and keep asking questions – which they did. Rob says:

*“The opportunity to share something of who God is with young people, you can never tire of that. We’re not doing it in a way that tells them what they should believe, but instead, we say, ‘let’s look at this together’.*

*“So, to be able to bring history, geography, personal testimony, the love and sacrifice of Jesus, forgiveness, gentleness, and kindness, in front of a young person in an immersive and interactive way is so powerful.”*

In addition to its Reception to Year 6 classes, Marden Vale also has two special resource-based classes for children with complex needs. Annie Jones, Resource Based Teacher, was thrilled her pupils visited Key to Life and that the session could be adapted in terms of its length to suit them.



The two, Year 6 classes had been having issues around self-confidence, and how they spoke to themselves and one another. Rob spoke powerfully about “Jesus’ love, loving ourselves, and one another”.

Emma says: *“The cues I got from my class were mainly non-verbal cues. I could see they were reflecting, and it was quite a deep reflection, and when they came back to the classroom, they were incredibly calm and that is not a ‘home-time’ thing usually”.*

For those few moments, I felt you could have heard a pin drop. All these little faces were staring at Rob as they really took in what he was saying about what love really means and what Jesus’ love means. Especially that they were loved and lovable.

As the backdrop of Bethlehem played on the screens behind them, it brought tears to my eyes. Sitting in a van, in a carpark, in a small town in Wiltshire, I really felt that the Holy Spirit was there, working in the hearts of these young children – showing them that they really mattered to God.

And none of this would have been possible without Key to Life and the message of who Jesus was; when He was born and died; and how He still loves every child.

If you would like to find out more about Counties’ schools resources visit [www.countiesuk.org](http://www.countiesuk.org) or email [keytoLife@countiesuk.org](mailto:keytoLife@countiesuk.org)

## JOANNA ROSHAN GREW UP IN A CHRISTIAN FAMILY BUT ADMITS SHE DIDN'T KNOW JESUS AS HER PERSONAL SAVIOUR – HOWEVER, SERIOUS HEALTH ISSUES CHANGED ALL THAT.

**She attends the same church as Counties Evangelist, Pastor Charles Addoco.**

Joanna, 18, is studying biomedical sciences at St Georges University of London. She has attended church from an early age:

*"It continuously instilled values of discipline, obedience and gratitude alongside a love that I would only start to understand and appreciate following the events of 2019 when I really began to question whether this faith was truly mine."*

Joanna, who lives in Barkingside in Essex, was hospitalised a few times due to severe allergic reactions to which the doctors could find no cause. She was on a lot of medication. Joanna admits the drugs had

a big impact on her – not just her physical state, but also her mental state.

As a student it was difficult for her to keep up with her studies and the other responsibilities in her life because of the side effects of the medication. She also found that it affected her relationships with her close friends.

*"I often found myself questioning whether they were genuinely there for me and soon I found it very difficult to open up about my struggles and instead chose to suffer in silence."*

*"At this point in my life, I didn't have a*



*relationship with God and barely even knew Him as I still viewed the whole concept of this religion as an act of duty. Therefore, God wasn't someone I was seeking to open up to for comfort and support during these difficult times.*

*"Naturally, the hardships that I endured became tougher to bear and soon I began to lose the positive person that I once was who was always excited to see what the future holds."*

But all of that changed in 2020 when she attended the first Sunday service of the New Year with her family at Emmanuel Christian Fellowship in Ilford, and their

pastor talked about how it was going to be a year of harvest. Joanna says:

*"I still remember for the first time in a while, hoping with all my heart that this year would be a year of fruitfulness for me, and that God would change my situation around once and for all."*

God not only answered but exceeded her expectations: *"As He started to pave the path for a renewed and abundant journey with Christ. As He brought to life the promises that He made to me in 2 Corinthians 3:18."*

***“And our faces are not covered. We all show the Lord’s glory, and we are being changed to be like him. This change in us brings more and more glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”***

In the weeks that followed, during Friday prayer meetings held at her home in Barkingside, Joanna and the others who attended, were asked to prepare a spoken word about passages that inspired them the most. This gave her the opportunity not only to read but deeply reflect on God’s word.

*“I took comfort not only hearing about the way in which Jesus brought characters such as Job, Hannah, and Paul out of their struggles - never failing to once leave their side from beginning to end, but also through the fact that their pain seemed to always carry great purpose.*

*“In these moments, I realised that their struggle never got to steal God’s calling for their lives and it was this that encouraged me to keep fighting towards the calling that God could have for my life in the midst of my situation.”*

The opportunity to meditate more on God’s word expanded during the pandemic. With schools closed and exams cancelled Joanna found herself seeking God through her desire to build a relationship with Him and she found herself *“filled with the joy, confidence and peace that surpasses all understanding”*.

*“The more I sought after Him, the more I realised that He was there through every battle that I faced. When I felt like I had no one to turn to, He still chose never to forsake me. God made sure always to send His support through those around me, even when I chose not to acknowledge Him.”*

Witnessing and experiencing about the goodness of God has enabled Joanna to feel she has finally been *“set free”*. She adds that knowing God is the strongest pillar of support in her life, enabled her to accept Christ as her personal saviour. And on Easter Sunday, in 2020, she was baptised and publicly declared she was a follower of Him.

*“As I continued to spend more time in the presence of God, He placed a desire on my heart, to share my journey with others. Before long, I started to share my testimony along with spoken words that I prepared, each week, through various websites, blogs, podcasts and even for a Sunday youth service, with the support of Counties Evangelist, Pastor Charles Addoco, and Auntie Jeeva.”*

***“I have always been a shy person who doesn’t feel comfortable being vulnerable with anyone; but by God’s grace, I was able to carry out the newfound purpose that he had for me through a boldness and courage that I had never experienced before.”***

Joanna adds that placing God in the centre of her life enabled an unshakable faith to grow inside her and going back to school as a changed person, in September 2020, she was able to see the way God had really moulded her character. She now supports and encourages those who are also struggling in their life.

*“With Jesus as my rock and firm foundation, I would like God to build on this purpose that he has already started in me, extending from my surrounding environment at school to other communities that don’t know the God that loves them just as much as He loves me.”*

She admits that even though there were times her faith was tested during the past two years, she thanks God that she’s always placed her complete trust in Him first in



every situation, despite being someone who used to depend on her own abilities.

*“I look forward to seeing the way that God is working within me, and I sincerely hope that those who feel helpless, afraid and alone take comfort in this testimony as proof that Jesus is the light at the end of the tunnel, and He is calling on all to know Him now.*

If you would like to find your local Counties evangelists visit: [www.countiesuk.org/evangelists](http://www.countiesuk.org/evangelists)



# WARM SPACES

**‘Warm Spaces’ – set up in churches – by Counties workers to help with the cost-of-living crisis are showing God’s love in a practical way.**

*It’s great to see that spring is finally arriving after a long cold winter. But it’s also great to know that Counties Evangelists and Neighbourhood Chaplains have been helping those in need over the last few months.*

**Mike Thomas**, a Counties Associate Evangelist and the Community Outreach Worker at Rumney Chapel, in Cardiff, helped launch the ‘The Living Room’ (TLR) in response to the cost-of-living crisis in his community.

The Chapel already has a Foodbank which has given out more than 250,000 meals and regularly feeds about 30 to 40 families each week.

Through conversations with local people already using the food bank, the church realised that in addition to rising food bills, the cost of energy was a big worry for people.

This sparked the idea for the TLR, which opened in November, last year, and has seen over 200 local people come through its doors since then.

ITV’s breakfast show, Good Morning Britain, featured Mike and the TLR. He told the interviewer:

*“Everybody who is coming in is particularly concerned about their heating bills. The choice is between having to heat their homes or eat food. We’ve had mums come in who’ve not eaten for a day or two because they’ve not had enough money to feed their children.*

*“We had a grandmother who came in, who said she only puts her heating on for half an hour in the morning, half an hour in the evening, just when her grandchildren come round and visit before and after school. Then she sits there in the dark because she is really worried. So, she came in four times yesterday and stayed for dinner which was great.”*

**Helen Eadie** is a Neighbourhood Chaplain and Partner in the Community at 360Life Church in Stockport. They

opened a weekly ‘Warm Space,’ from November, last year. It offers free soup and a roll at lunch time and an evening meal to anyone in need.

Helen says: *“We have one old lady who lives opposite the church who we’ve invited many times, but she’s never come. But since we started Warm Spaces, she comes every week. She told us: ‘I need this. I have been going to bed at seven o’clock in the evening, turning the lights off and getting under the covers just to keep warm.’”*

Helen says they have seen numbers increasing every week:

*“A couple of weeks ago we had a single mum come in. She’s just moved back to this area. She just walked in and said: ‘My house is so cold. We’ve got no carpets and no curtains in many rooms. And I just saw this and I wanted to come in’.*

*“She came in and spent the whole day with us and picked up her daughter from school and brought her back for her tea. We helped her daughter who was struggling with her maths homework, and they’ve been back every week since.”*

One lady who has been coming with her grandson, who she cares for fulltime, has now been to a church service a couple of times and we have been able to pray with her on a couple of occasions as well. She is not afraid to ask for help and Helen has been able to go round to the house and offer some hands-on help which has been invaluable to her.

*"The church community has really stepped up to the challenge of being there for their local community, and when a new person walks into the warm space, they are so warm and welcoming that people end up staying longer than they expect to."*

**James Bell** is a Neighbourhood Chaplain and Youth and Community Chaplain at Tile Kiln Church in Chelmsford.

The church was already running a coffee morning every day but have extended it as a Warm Space so mums can pop in after dropping their children off from school.

James says the number of pensioners has also doubled since they advertised the coffee morning as a 'Warm Space':

*"We have one old lady who comes in who is heating the space she is in when she is at home. I don't know if she's got a heated blanket or an electric fire, but I know she's heating the person rather than heating the house."*

The church has even started the novel idea of advertising Sunday morning as a 'Warm Space'. James says:

*"People who come in don't have to engage with the service, but it is open to the public and it is a warm space. We don't make any secret about it. They can sit at the back and join us for tea and coffee afterwards."*

James has also kindly been given funds from a local councillor, from his own personal allowance, to buy items for the local community. So, he buys and distributes electric blankets, duvets, pillows and toasters for families in need.

*"People are very reluctant to seek help. There is a lot of pride – that's the best way of describing it. They are embarrassed that they are in the situation they are in and it is through no fault of their own."*

**Martin Korchinsky** is a Counties Evangelist. He helped found the Neighbourhood Chaplains scheme in his



local church, and is Pastor of Brinnington Community Church, in Stockport. The church is based in the middle of a council estate with just under 10,000 residents.

Like Mike and Helen, Martin saw how the people around the church community were really struggling for support with even the basics – warmth and food. Especially with the current cost of living crisis. So, they opened up three times a week, between 9.30 am and 4 pm, serving a free hot meals, tea and coffee.

Martin says on a typical day, 30 people come through their doors: on their busiest day they served 50.

*"Families and individuals are having to make choices about whether their heating stays on or the shopping gets done. Hopefully, because the church now provides a warm space, local people won't have to face the Hobson's choice of 'heating or eating'."*

Such has been the demand that Martin says Age UK has teamed up with them to

provide extra funding and help isolated pensioners, even putting on an armchair exercise programme once a week.

*"We have four ladies who have a whole day out now as they go to the local leisure centre for their breakfast – toast and tea. Then they come here for lunch and a get-together and finally go back to the leisure centre for an evening activity and snacks. So, they don't have to worry about anything – they are fed and kept warm for the whole day."*

It has proved to be a great way of connecting with people. Some of the service users have brought in biscuits or cakes and one lady has been 'guest chef' on a Monday: providing home cooked broccoli and stilton soup for the group. They have even seen one or two coming to the Sunday service.

**If your church would like to connect more with the community around you, contact us for how Counties' resource such as Neighbourhood Chaplains can help.**

## AN EXCITING NEW CHAPTER BEGINS AS COUNTIES TAKES ON NEW REGIONAL COORDINATORS

### In January, Counties took on the responsibility of Partnership UK Regional Coordinators.

There are currently five Regional Coordinators who work to develop and strengthen church growth, revitalisation, and mission through networking.

Their role fits the Counties mission as an evangelistic organisation by supporting evangelists directly in the mission field, and also by being a resource to local churches - inspiring and equipping them to make disciples.

We are looking forward to sharing stories of churches and people in their regions in future editions of Ignite which will now be expanded.

In this Ignite, we will be finding out more about some of the Regional Coordinators and the areas they cover – also their hopes and aspirations for future.



**SIMON LADD**  
Regional Coordinator East Anglia

#### Tell us about yourself Simon.

I live in Bury St Edmunds, and I'm married to Belinda. We have three grown up children. I'm retired but was senior leader of West Road Church in Bury St Edmunds for ten years. Since then, I have been working with Partnership (part-time) as Area Coordinator with over 7000 square miles to cover, and now for Counties.

#### What's East Anglia like as a region in terms of its reception of the Gospel?

In the bigger towns like Bury St Edmunds,

Ipswich and Lowestoft there are a good number of strong churches. But quite a few rural churches are struggling. For example, 30 years ago there were 43 Grace Baptist churches Suffolk – now there are 27.

#### Reversing church decline in rural areas must be tough – how have you found it?

I can't pretend it's easy but there have been some good news stories. There is a church in Brockley, seven miles south of Bury St Edmunds, which was on the brink of closure in 2019. It had about 12 people left. I offered to put on a Carols by Candlelight which was well supported. We have been helping there since, working hard to get involved with the local community and build relationships with the local school. At the first Sunday service in 2023 – there were 62 people present.

#### What are your hopes and prayers for local churches in your region looking forward?

I am focusing at the moment on what genuine Christian unity looks like between local church fellowships. I am trying to get past denominations and get churches who are local to work together – as long as they can agree on the absolute foundational truths of the Gospel.

So far, the reception has been quite good. A lot of the churches are quite 'frail' and so they welcome other Christians saying: "Can we get together?" "Can we support each other?" "Can we do some joint events?"

#### How have you been encouraging churches to reach out into their community?

At the chapel in the village of Brockley, I encourage all the Christians who attend to download the village newsletter and join in with some of the many activities on offer. There's a computer club, a craft club, a coffee morning, carpet bowls, cricket and gardening and so on.

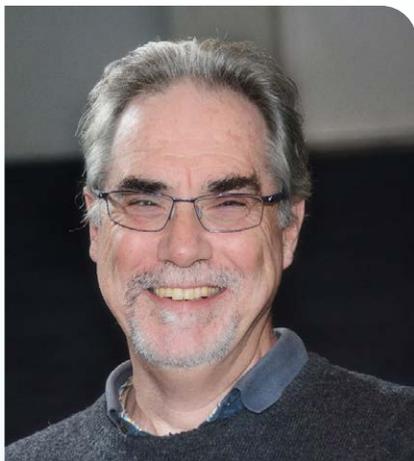
I say: "Just pick something that you are interested in. Go along and get involved. Talk to people, make some friendships and show the community that we care".

Many churches are already trying to do too much. So instead of giving themselves more work – I encourage people to participate in something that the community is already doing and get to know people that way.

It's been effective. We had 92 people at the 2022 Christmas Eve carol service and around 30 of them were from the village or live so close that they had walked. A good number of them were in the chapel for the first time.

#### What are your hopes now you are working with Counties?

It's early days, but I know many of the Counties workers in this area, and the work they do. I am really excited about Counties new emphasis on supporting churches – which has gone into the strapline – because that's really where my heart has been for a long time. But the evangelistic emphasis is vital too and must not be lost.



## JOHN JENKINS

**Regional Coordinator  
London & South East**

### Tell Ignite about yourself John

I am married to Lorna. We have two grown-up sons, and we live in Harrow, West London. I am an Elder at Journey Church, Harrow. I am also part of 'No Place Left' (London) – a global movement which concentrates on multiplying disciples, churches, and leaders. This dovetails with work I have been doing with Partnership. I work with the London Hub – church planters and church revitalisers – to build relationships between church leaders, foster co-operation and create a learning community.

### How 'healthy' are churches in your region?

A lot of churches don't have a clear vision of where they are going. They exist because they exist. Many just don't have a

mission strategy at all – they occasionally hand out tracts and think that is good enough.

### Have you been able to help churches change that emphasis?

When I have been talking with churches, it's primarily about helping them to re-shape their vision and see the need for mission. Our own church did the same.

Since July 2018, we have focused on connecting, praying, and intentionally sharing the gospel with people. Last year we knocked on 1938 doors. We engaged in 787 conversations. We shared the Gospel 130 times. In the last four years we have seen 25 people make commitments. We became intentional because we realised, we couldn't expect people to come to us – we had to go to them.

### How have you seen God at work in your region?

In November, last year, I met with a group of Christians in Peckham, South London, to train and equip them with simple evangelism tools and then take them out on the streets.

There were 20 leaders, drawn from nine mainly diaspora churches. During the morning they were trained in sharing the Gospel.

Most of the group had never done anything like this before and they were only out for a short period of time, but the results were really encouraging. Out of the 122 doors that were knocked on, 50 people were engaged, 18 were prayed for, 14 heard the gospel and one person was saved.

And it does not stop there...

Several weeks later, a Bible was delivered to one of the homes we'd previously visited. The intended recipient wasn't there, but her housemate was. He heard the Gospel and got saved.

And it does not stop there...

One lady who came to the training was so inspired and emboldened by what she'd heard, she gathered her women's group together, that invited my colleague, Tony, to do some further training with them. Then they took to the streets, buggies and all, and six teenagers gave their lives to Christ as a result.



## PHIL DAVIES

**Regional Coordinator South Wales**

Many of our regular Ignite readers will already know Phil as a Counties Evangelist and One2Lead South Wales & Borders leader. He has also been a Partnership Regional Coordinator.

### Phil how has your work with Counties and Partnership overlapped over the past few years?

I joined Counties in 2004 after being with Operation Mobilisation for 20 years and latterly working with churches here in South Wales. I became a Regional Coordinator for Partnership in 2013 and there was such an overlap between the churches I was already working with in the areas of evangelism, Bible teaching, youth work, camp work – that this is a natural progression for me.

### What's your role?

We have seen a decline in numbers in some of the more traditional churches.

So, firstly, my role has been trying to help with leadership development. Cardiff leaders have done some 'Masterclasses' with leaders to help them look at vision, direction, and adaptability and we have sought to support them.

Secondly, it's networking – getting churches to interact together. We hosted the 'Living the Passion' conference in 2019 with Prof John Lennox as the speaker which we intend to replicate in April this year.

Thirdly, my role is to help with revitalisation. To offer churches an outside consultant to do a 'church check', for example, to see ways they might change.

### What are your hopes and prayers for the future?

My hopes and prayers really refer to the three areas I've mentioned above. I want to be able to provide training, inspiration and encouragement for churches who may be struggling.



## ANDY DYKES

### Regional Coordinator North West

#### Share a bit about your yourself Andy?

I am married to Avril, and we have two sons. We live in Rock Ferry on the Wirral, in Merseyside. I've been working in the region for over five years and attend Cornerstone church, Wirral.

#### What have you been doing with churches in your region during this time?

As a Partnership Regional Coordinator and now Counties Regional Coordinator, I cover an area from Merseyside to Cumbria. When I first came there wasn't a lot going on, so I started making connections with church leaders across

the region and began 'Partners in Prayer' for them to get together. I have now made a lot of connections and see my role as being a first port of call to help leaders with any issues or challenges they may be facing – practical or spiritual. I have arranged a masterclass course for leaders. I preach every second Sunday. I mentor younger Christian leaders and arrange preaching opportunities for less experienced speakers. I take churches on 'away weekends' where we look at church life and mission in light of scripture. I am also doing church revitalisation health checks for Counties.

#### How are churches in your area fairing?

I would say they have gone from decline to stability in the last ten years. There is a new sense of passion for mission in the area which transfers itself to churches across the spectrum. We are seeing people saved and we are seeing people baptised across churches with a few exceptions – those churches who don't engage with outsiders.

#### What would your hopes and prayers be?

There needs to be a heart for mission. The majority of Christians don't lead people to Christ and that's the reality. So, you've got disciples who don't make disciples. Part of my work is to point that out and to look at ways to reach lost people. I know that Counties is passionate about mission, and I think if that can be communicated to churches, at ground level, that will be really powerful.

In Matthew 28, Jesus says:

***"Go and make disciples of all nations."***

I think that process of going, baptising and teaching is something the church is not necessarily good at. We are good at teaching, but we are not great at either 'going' or baptising. My heart is to see the church filled with members who go out with Gospel in their heart and in their mouth, who are ready to speak for Christ, live for Christ and live as disciples.

#### How do you do that in a practical way?

We have set up 'discipleship communities' here in Rock Ferry. We open up our homes. We don't use buildings. We get to know neighbours. We give out invites to come over to the house. We also invite people out for coffee. I will bring a Christian friend along with me and a couple of non-Christian friends. We'll talk about football and our jobs, but I always talk to my Christian friend about what happened in church on Sunday or what I am reading in the Bible, and that opens up great conversations. And we've seen a number of people get saved here which is fantastic.

#### Is there a specific story you would like to share with Ignite readers?

Just before Covid I asked the group here to pray for a member of my family called Mike, who hadn't gone to church for thirty years. I wanted them to ask God to give

me the courage to challenge him about this walk with God. I did it just before lockdown and it wasn't very well received. But once lockdown ended, he rang me and said he wanted to come to our home group.

He has been coming every single week. His life has turned around. He is praying and reading his Bible.

***There's been a transformation in his heart. And this all came from a challenge that was really quite tense and difficult.***

***The joy for me is seeing his commitment – from indifference to discipleship.***

# “I JUST WANT TO KNOW WHAT IT’S ALL ABOUT. WHY ARE WE HERE?”

**Jerry Shirazian talks with Counties Evangelist, Jonathan Brain, about faith as he searches for life’s meaning.**

Jerry Shirazian was working in Greggs and recognised Counties Evangelist, Jonathan Brain, as “the man who used to come into primary school with the puppets” when Jonathan popped in for lunch in December, last year. They started chatting and have been meeting up for coffee regularly ever since.

**Jonathan Brain (JB):** “I know you, Jerry, but just introduce yourself.”

**Jerry:** “I’m 21 and live here in Chippenham in Wiltshire with my parents. I don’t have a partner, but have a little boy, Albert, who is one and a half. I am passionate about the guitar. I want to make my living playing music. I’d love to teach the guitar, to give back the things people have taught me.”

**JB:** [Laughs] “Well, I’m kind of hoping you can give me a lesson, but you may have the world’s worse student on your hands. I can hear it but not play it. On a more serious note, why did you get in touch?”

**Jerry:** “I just want to know what it’s all about. Why are we here? Why do we do what we do? How can we do it better and be more connected? I feel so many people go through life without questioning why they are here. They just take for granted the fact that they are alive and before they know it they are dead and gone.”

**JB:** “At one of our first meetings you brought a friend along and I was pretty blunt with you both about salvation. I said that we were all lying thieves and we went through the list of sins that many of us have committed. I enjoy saying we are all sinners because that’s who I feel I am, but we can be saved from that.”

**Jerry:** “It made me smile because all actions have consequences. It’s a bold thing to hear but I am not surprised by it really. It seems apparent that everyone is a sinner. It’s pretty obvious.”



**JB:** “That’s a real gem of honesty. I’ve heard so few people say that. A lot of Christians might say that’s ‘too harsh’ and it’s better to say, ‘Jesus loves you.’”

**Jerry:** “But the more you sugar coat things, the more you are taking away from the original message.”

**JB:** “So, what do you think people are searching for in life?”

**Jerry:** “I don’t know, and I don’t think most people know. I think a lot of us are aimlessly floating about hoping the wind takes us somewhere. There are some people in life who are blessed or lucky

that they know what they want, and they’ll chase it. But most people don’t have that, and it takes a lot of pushing or nudging and even then, they don’t see it.”

**JB:** “There’s a story in the Bible where a King sees writing on the wall and gets it interpreted by a guy named Daniel who tells him it says: ‘You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting’. This King should have known better and should have got right with God. He only had hours left to live but he didn’t know that.”

**Jerry:** “It is sad that we need someone to point out the obvious.”

**JB:** "So, what are you looking for Jerry?"

**Jerry:** "Good question. Meaning I suppose. A way to live a purposeful life. Something that makes me want to get up and live the best life. We all have bad days, but we can still do our best and that's what counts. Yeah, there has to be meaning."

**JB:** "People end up stuck in a rut and all you have to do is block up either end and then you've got a grave."

**Jerry:** "That's really profound. If I keep doing the same thing over and over again you are going to be doing the same destructive habits till you pass. Crazy."

**JB:** "The thing with Christianity is that it doesn't ask you to climb out of that rut on your own by being good enough, like other religions do. It says Jesus will pull

you out of that rut because you will never get out on your own. Jesus will put your feet on solid ground. He will make you a born-again person.

**JB:** "So, I am interested – why do you keep coming back and continuing these conversations?"

**Jerry:** "Every time we've had a chat I come away with a different lens and new perspective to look through. It keeps me thinking. The idea of being born again, that you can have a completely new take on life. You are the same person but you're not. But what you thought you were and the old you doesn't have to be the 'be all and end all'.

**JB:** "You haven't yet become a Christian yet. Where do you think you are on this journey?"



**Jerry:** "The starting gun has been fired and I've set off. I'm thoroughly enjoying how things are unfolding and taking it in. I feel like a new chapter in my life is beginning because I always come away from these conversations thinking and pondering. Even when you talk about the heavy topics – like everyone being a sinner – it is still profound. It doesn't put me off. To see the light, you need to understand the darkness."

**JB:** "What did you think about Jesus before we started chatting and what do you think now?"

**Jerry:**

**"I wasn't really interested to be honest. Now I am a lot more open-minded and curious. I started to try and develop a bit of a relationship and speak to Him a bit more often.**

**I try and give thanks for certain things. I have noticed, within myself, a greater sense of appreciation for being alive.**

**JB:** "Where do you think your faith journey will go to from here?"

**Jerry:** "I am enjoying the journey and the pace it's going at. Some days are more involved than others. When I feel I need some new insight or information, it will come.

I've started Googling and going on YouTube. I am loving how it's unfolding it. I am loving going down the road. There are some journeys I haven't relished but this is a journey I would like to continue. I am enjoying it.

There is a much longer recording of the interview. If you would like to hear it contact Jonathan:

**jonathanbraingospeljohn316@gmail.com**

Please pray for Jerry, and all the contacts Jonathan Brain has contact with. Pray also for the people around you who you may be able to engage with, even as you "pop in for lunch" at Greggs!

## ANDY MUGFORD, COUNTIES EVANGELIST AND EVANGELISTS OFFICER, URGES US TO PAUSE, AND SEEK THE SPIRIT'S PROMPTING, NUDGING AND REDIRECTING

Like many of you, I have spent the last few weeks watching the holiday companies repeatedly pushing TV adverts, as well as email and social media pop-ups, with enticing images of sandy beaches and warm climes.

With grey skies and low temperatures around me at the moment, they are very inviting.

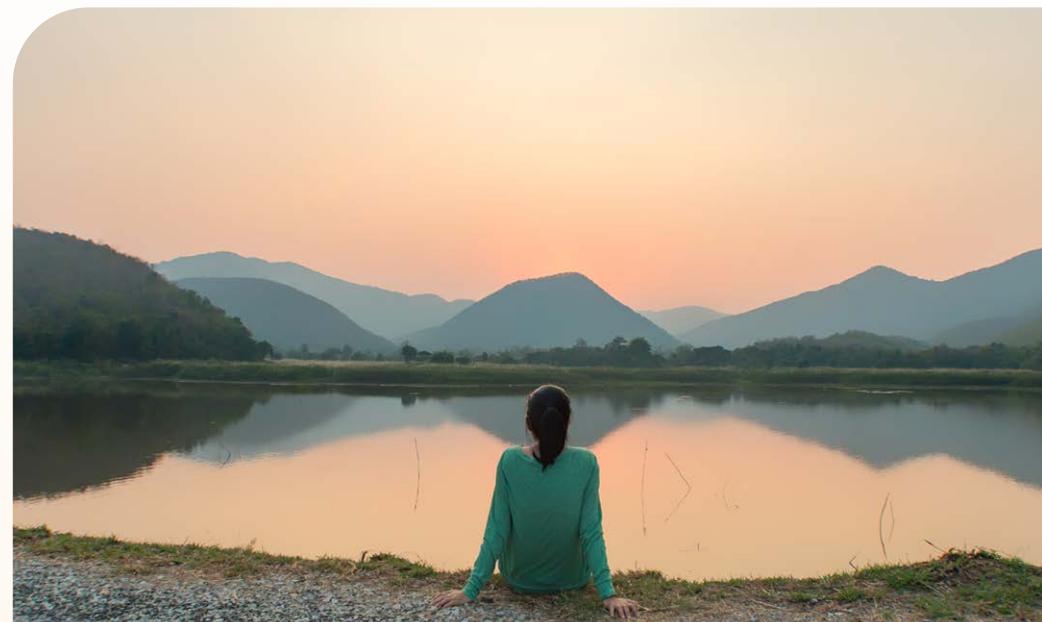
It causes me to ask myself – who is in control of me and the decisions I make? Such as, where I go for a summer break; but also, what I wear, what I watch, where I eat?

We are bombarded in so many ways with influences that, at times, can so easily mould our decision making. Having recently had the family over, comments like: "Why are you still wearing that, Dad?" are ringing in my ears too.

Even though I feel very comfortable with the look, clearly it is not 2023 enough for the younger generation.

Jesus had those who wanted to control him too and they were close family members. In John 7 we read of a short conversation Jesus' half-brothers have with him. Just ahead of a very popular religious festival in Judea, they are keen He steps out of the shadows more:

*"Why don't you leave here and go up to the Feast so your disciples can get a good look at the works you do? No one who intends to be publicly known does everything behind the scenes. If you're*



*serious about what you are doing, come out in the open and show the world."*  
John 7: 3-4 (The Message)

While there is some common sense in what they said, it was common sense from a non-believing human perspective. It seems incredible to me that these family members did not believe Jesus to be the Messiah, despite having grown up with hearing their parents telling and re-telling the stories of his birth; of seeing how he was somehow different. But John is clear – they did not believe in him (v.7).

With that kind of personal pressure to conform, I would more than likely have given in to their way of doing Christian ministry. Not Jesus. He is very clear: *"The right time for me has not yet come"*. (v. 6)

Why did He say that? What does His response show us of His calling? I offer two suggestions to consider:

### **1. It's not about me, but the One who sent me.**

They wanted the miraculous – Jesus knew that it was not about Him: He did not need a marketing manager. Rather it is about

His Father's message. It is His teaching and His timing that was critical and life-transforming. Jesus uses the word "testify" in v. 7. His calling was to testify to the evil that people live in and live out. He was challenging their religious and cultural norms. He recognised that this was not a popular message. It caused many to hate Him, but He remained faithful to His calling.

Despite the passing of 2000 years, nothing has changed, has it? Christians are increasingly opposed for testifying to God's better way in contrast to the world's idea of a better life. Too many lose their lives today for being followers of Jesus and remaining faithful to His calling to make Him Known.

## 2. His purpose was focused on the cross

While the crowd did want more of the miraculous – and I do too - Jesus warned earlier in John's Gospel account about chasing after miracles:

*"Will you never believe in me unless you see miraculous signs and wonders?"*  
John 4:48

The Jewish crowd would not be drawn to, and could not understand, an event that hadn't even happened yet. It was not newsworthy and would not convince anyone.

And yet, as we approach Easter, from the other side of the empty cross and empty grave, how wrong they were.



Jesus paused – He did not take off to join them at the Festival – immediately anyway. He went with God's timing.

My wife was recently in the car on a three-hour journey and was prompted to pause too. There were a number of people-situations that were on her mind. She chose to leave the radio and hands-free phone off and pray as she drove and asked for something to share with her housebound friend.

The phrase "You are safe – you are on my rock" came to her mind as she did so, which she later shared. The response was that this was spot on for her friend.

As we approach a busy time in our church diaries over Easter; a time we all want to take every advantage of for the Gospel, I am challenged by this short family conversation between Jesus and His earthly brothers.

Instead of the usual rush, rush and busy, busy approach I adopt, I am inspired to remind myself – and you too - of the significance of the cross.

Let's take time to appreciate afresh for ourselves the work of grace and new life that it symbolises for us in Jesus' once for all sacrifice in my – in our place.

In the refreshed awareness of this truth and our new identity in Him, lets intentionally pause, more frequently, to listen for the Spirit's prompting, nudging and redirecting.



We may not hit the headlines; we may well be met with unbelief and even opposition, just as Jesus was, but in God's eternal plan, we will be more fruitful in making Jesus known.

**After all, it is His story we share, and this account reminds us to go tell it in His timing too.**

## JUST A MINUTE WITH...

### COUNTIES EVANGELIST KIM HOBBS



**Kim has been a Counties Evangelist for eight years. He is married to Jo and lives in Hemel Hempstead in Hertfordshire. They have two grown-up sons.**

#### When did you become a Christian?

We had always gone to church. When I was 11, I went on a weekend discipleship course. My parents were on it, so I went along too. I heard the Gospel and got saved.

I remember, later, lying in bed and crying with joy and not really understanding anything about it but just knowing that I was loved by God.

#### What does being part of the Counties family mean to you?

Counties has been an inspiration. Without it, I would have felt incredibly alone. It would have been so much more challenging.

One of the things I love about Counties is their pastoral support. I have had reason to lean heavily on Counties during one challenging period, so I know it's true. If you ask me one word about Counties I would say 'surprise'. Every time I hear testimonies from Counties Evangelists, I come away surprised and amazed about

what they do, what they have achieved, and what beautiful people they are.

#### What have your highlights been?

When I sit down with other evangelists, I am so inspired by what they are doing; their creativity, commitment, and their kindness - which inspires me to do more.

#### What is your favourite Bible passage and why?

It's Exodus 33:12-23. I love this passage because it shows us the depths of the relationship Moses had with God and the depths of the relationship we should aspire to have with our Father in Heaven.

Verse 12 says:

*Moses said to the LORD:*

*"You have said, 'I know you by name and you have found favour with me.'*

That is the most exciting thing I can imagine – that God knows me by name too and He cares about me personally. I find that astonishing, wonderful, and comforting.

It inspires me to tell others:

*"You can have that relationship with God".*

# YOUR LOCAL EVANGELISTS

## NORTH OF ENGLAND

Julian & Ella Gutteridge  
Martin & Angie Korchinsky  
Lee & Lesley Marsland  
Matt & Nicola Rich  
Rob & Sarah Watson  
Phyllis Jenkins (Senior)

## MIDLANDS

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

## SOUTH EAST

Charles & Elizabeth Addoco  
Will & Lynne Andrews  
Tim & Joy Ayrtton  
Mark & Amanda Bingham  
John Hardwick  
Kim & Jo Hobbs  
Tony & Ruth Hood  
Colin & Linda Johnson  
Caleb & Adanesh Mathewos  
Andrew & Rachel Mugford  
Madelene Bathgate (Senior)  
Lionel Cargro (Senior)  
Victor Jack (Senior)  
Andy & Miriam Jelfs (Seniors)  
John & Jane Martin (Seniors)

## SOUTH WEST

Jacquie & Tim Bodman  
Steve Ellacott (AE)  
Mike & Su Stange  
David & Katie Symons  
Jean Campbell (Senior)

## SOUTH CENTRAL

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

## WALES

Clive & Fiona Cornish  
Paul & Laura Davies  
Phil & Sheila Davies  
Janet Hawking (AE)  
Mike & Jan Thomas (AE)  
Steve & Gwyn Treseder (AE)  
Grace Anderson (Senior)

## EVANGELIST TRAINING PROGRAMME

Peter & Victoria Barker  
Steve & Debra Cowles  
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AE – Associate Evangelist  
ETP – Evangelists' Training Programme  
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