



Update to Volunteers – February 2022

As we get to the end of February our patrols remain as busy as ever. Our teams continue to rise to the many challenges we face and with a variety of enterprising solutions. A prime example of this was earlier in the month when Geoff Pardon's team was approached by a young woman who was on her way home after finishing work at a local bar. She pointed out a man who was following her who had suggested to her in an unsolicited approach that he should take her home. The man in question was by this time also in company with two other men and unsurprisingly, the woman was



very anxious. The Lord had placed the Pastors exactly in the right place! The team established the young woman lived nearby but were concerned that she might be followed to her door. The team duly ensured the woman was taken out of sight of the men. She was then clothed in a Street Pastor jacket and cap and walked home, the men oblivious to the ruse. Brilliant initiative and a tactic I will certainly be using in the future!

On one of the NTE patrols the team was approached by a sensitive young man who was at pains to explain that he hadn't felt confident to come out into the city at night for some time. However, knowing the Street Pastors were out was a major factor in feeling he could go back out into the NTE in the knowledge that the SPs would be looking out for him if there was a problem and that there were people around who cared for others.

On a recent Friday patrol we ended up dealing with a 57-year-old man with the mental capacity of a 6-year-old. He had 'escaped' from his home over 10 miles away and was clearly very vulnerable having apparently walked to the centre of Southampton. There was some great partnership working between ourselves, St. John's Ambulance and the Police. It was also amazing to see how the Lord managed the safety of this individual. The level of vulnerability we see in the city is huge and our Lord invariably has His Street Pastors strategically placed!

For those of you that like to 'study the form' you will have noticed that in the quarterly stats, that have recently been shared, covering the period from 1st October 2021 to 31st December 2021, there were some alarming numbers. Certain categories in this quarter recorded the highest levels ever (since May 2009), including *Distressed/Upset*, *Safeguarding*, *Mental Health*, *Assisted Lone & Intoxicated Person*



and *Substance Abuse*. Other categories are also very high compared to this quarter in previous years including *Assisted Intoxicated Person* and *Anti-Social Behaviour*.

I have mentioned previously that when the restrictions were relaxed on the 19th July 2021, there seemed to be a shift, as it were, in the Teutonic plates of the NTE. Nobody in the support services had thought the changes would last so long. The uptake in the busyness of the NTE has meant that the Police have now moved away from 'Green' weekends in favour of either 'Red' or 'Amber' which of course determines greater commitment of resource. The patrols have also stepped up to the increased challenges. Amidst all these obvious challenges I am minded of when Jesus said "Stay alert. This is hazardous work I'm assigning you. You're going to be like sheep running through a wolf pack, so don't call attention to yourselves. Be as shrewd as a snake, inoffensive as a dove." (Matt. 10:16 -Message) We remain prayerful and resolute and our ministry continues to be so obviously blessed.



On the 17th February we were invited to the Violence Against Women and Girls ([VAWG](#)) conference at St. Mary's Stadium, hosted by the Violence Reduction Unit at SCC. It was a well-attended event and heartening to see representatives from so many support services coming together to look at what was being done in the city in respect of this very important issue. Southampton Street Pastors received a number of favourable mentions for our work in this area, a really positive reflection of His Church in what was obviously a secular event.

Our Community patrols are now settling into using the Parish Office for St. James by the Church as their base as they cover Shirley High Street down to the Railway Station. Initial feedback has been excellent with the teams having lots of opportunities to engage with folk. We will reassess things again when the lighter nights return. Our Community teams now have their own dedicated radio to keep in touch with Whisky One. We are indebted to Go!Southampton for supplying this valuable tool.

Homelessness – We are just starting to see a slight upturn in those sleeping out in the city centre. The numbers are still quite low when taken against an historical perspective. However, it is worrying. I can think of two individuals that are currently sleeping out who have a number of serious physical conditions ranging from leukaemia to heart disease. Please keep them all in your prayers. I am heartened by our afternoon patrols who now have oodles of time to spend with this vulnerable community. Since the first lockdown we have submitted nearly 50 safeguarding referral to Adult Services, many of these emanating from our afternoon patrols. This is vital work, we look back over 2021 and remember all those from the 'Street Community' that passed away. Anything we can do to help ensure the support services are fully briefed must be a good thing and ultimately help to save lives.



Prayer – We remain excited to see that Karen Garner and Mark Munts have started a prayer walking initiative. They have since covered the Thornhill and City Centre areas. Please keep a look out for the next prayer walk in March. If you are interested, please get in touch with Mark at

prayer@southamptonstreetpastors.org. Our next quarterly meeting is at James Street Church on at 9am on Saturday 5th March 2022.

Training – We are now planning our spring training which starts on Friday 25th March 2022. We were delighted to hear that we are able to resume with our tried and trusted three weekend delivery model. You will recall there had been some issues with this resulting in us having to adopt a two-week model for the last two cohorts. We have had a number of people expressing interest but are always looking for more. If you require further details of the training dates and copies of our application form and process, please visit our [website](#). Please be bold and ask others to consider SSP, perhaps you might know someone who would like to come out on an observation? I am also delighted that HTB St. Mary's are actively promoting SPs with a view to a possible additional NTE patrol to service the student nights in the city. This at the very least represents yet another answer to prayer – keep them coming!

Social – Thank you to all who attended and helped at our social event on Saturday 25th February 2022. A special thanks to Millbrook Christian Centre for allowing us to use their facilities. It was a wonderful opportunity to catch-up with old friends.



Many of you also took the opportunity to undertake some brilliant medical emergency training the same day as the social, from our friends at Meon Valley Heart Start. They delivered two hours of fantastic training.

A personal reflection - I thought it would be interesting to gauge what Street Pastors means to certain individuals. This month I am indebted to Marian Weston who agreed to share the following –

I've been a Street Pastor for almost six years, going out on a Friday night as a member of a well led and great team. We have got to know each other as friends and respect each other's gifts and it is always good to see our team work together, each using their different skills and gifts when we are out.

We always have fun, there is always humour and I am often surprised and I have even been educated in some areas (!), but above all it is a rich and rewarding experience each time we are out.

For me, it is about taking the church onto the streets and showing compassion to all those we come across. My heart goes out to so many we meet. The street homeless, those enjoying the clubs and bars on a night out, the team work and co-operation with the police, door and CCTV staff, but so many do not have the hope that we as Christians have. So how do we share that hope and God's love with them? Just by being there..... identifying with them, communicating with them where

they are at, not judging them at all. Being prepared to listen; it is amazing how much you can learn about a person in a short time. There are so many who have such sad stories to tell, maybe because of bereavements, ill health, redundancy or relationship breakdowns which they've not spoken to anyone about before, but are willing to open up to a caring stranger. Helping people and giving practical support in so many different ways.

I believe that we can communicate the gospel by our actions and when appropriate by our words. It is always such a privilege to pray with people and share the good news and I am sure many seeds have been sown which I pray will bear fruit one day.

It is amazing to see God intervene in situations and with our wonderful prayer pastor support we have seen God at work when we have been at a loss as to what to do next. He has guided our steps to situations at the precise moment when we were needed. He really is there with us. We are always grateful for the thanks, high fives, enthusiastic hugs and kisses (pre-covid of course) from grateful revellers. It is amazing what gratitude is shown when a pair of flip flops, a couple of fruit pastilles, a hot chocolate or bottle of water is offered!

It is the love of Christ that compels me to go out each month and I am always truly humbled to see our Lord Jesus Christ at work each time.

A light relief...



And this years 'must have' accessories on the catwalks of London, Paris, Milan and St. Mary's....



A good sentiment to close on... "You cannot warm the hearts of people with God's love if they have an empty stomach and cold feet." William Booth