

GOOD NEWS

FOR NORWICH & NORFOLK

Easter 2013: FREE

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Archbishop cheered by Norwich crowds

Over 1,000 people gathered outside the Forum and at the Cathedral in Norwich on March 14 to meet the new Archbishop of Canterbury as he began a five-day prayer pilgrimage before his enthronement on March 21. Keith Morris reports.



In bright sunshine outside the Forum, a cheering crowd of around 500, including 100 school children, heard the Most Revd Justin Welby speak of his childhood love of Norfolk and then lead a prayer for the region against deprivation and unemployment.

Speaking exclusively to Good News for Norfolk, Archbishop Justin said that his biggest cause for hope for the church today is that "God is faithful".

His message to the church in Norfolk was: "Renew your confidence in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, both talk it and live it. Look for what you can do and not what you can't do. Pray and trust God for the resources."

The new Archbishop is passionate about the importance of prayer, which is why he decided to undertake a five-day prayer pilgrimage leading up to his enthronement on March 21.

"Wherever I look and I see real spiritual life, it is based in prayer," he said. "Therefore the best thing to do before my installation is to begin with some time in prayer and the more people that I can pray with the better."

When asked about the biggest issue facing the church today, Archbishop Welby told Good News: "You can over-generalise and it varies from place to place. But one of our biggest issues is a loss of spiritual confidence."

Speaking on the Norwich Diocesan website, Archbishop Justin said: "The key role of the Archbishop is to be a facilitator and catalyst. There is the capacity to bring people together and encourage and build up."

The Archbishop revealed that he chose Norwich as the start of his Journey in Prayer because: "I spent a lot of my childhood in Norfolk and love this part of the world. My wife says when I get up here I become a slightly different person - more relaxed!"

The central message of the five-day

pilgrimage is: "to be centred on Jesus Christ - that's why we start with prayer," said the Archbishop. "The church praying together and gathering to pray is something that draws other people to faith in Christ."

From the Forum, the Archbishop walked through Norwich city centre talking to people and handing out candles and cards before heading for Norwich Cathedral where local schoolchildren and members of the public were encouraged to join him and the Bishop of Norwich at various prayer stations throughout the day. Stations included a prayer tree, prayer paintings, prayer images, a prayer map, text prayer, icons and candle lighting, a reflective story, a labyrinth and Taize chants.

Archbishop Justin turned his back on a six-figure salary as a successful executive in the oil industry to train as an Anglican priest.

After an education at Eton and Trinity College Cambridge, he worked in areas of

conflict in both Africa and Iraq and, with wife Caroline, also smuggled Bibles into Communist Bloc countries in a converted camper van with a false floor.

The couple have five children and lost a sixth, seven-month-old daughter, Johanna, in a car crash in 1983, a life-changing tragedy. "It was a very dark time for my wife Caroline and myself, but in a strange way it actually brought us closer to God," he said in a recent interview.

Following the accident, the couple rejoined the evangelical Anglican church of Holy Trinity Brompton and the future Archbishop's path in the ministry began. It included a curacy in Warwickshire, becoming a canon of Coventry Cathedral, Dean of Liverpool Cathedral and then Bishop of Durham.

Of his ministry, Archbishop Justin has said: "I was unable to get away from a sense of God calling. I went kicking and screaming but I couldn't escape it."

The new Archbishop of Canterbury, the Rt Revd Justin Welby was greeted by large cheering crowds outside the Forum in Norwich.

HTB curate leads Norwich church revival project

NORWICH: Holy Trinity Brompton (HTB) curate Ian Dyble and his wife Jo have returned to Norfolk after a five-year absence to lead a church revival project at St Thomas Heigham in Norwich.

Ian, who used to work as a barrister in Norwich, has been a curate at HTB, famous as the home of the Alpha Course, since 2010. He was inducted into the post of Priest in Charge of the parish on March 11 by the Bishop of Norwich.

Ian said: "This is very much a partnership between HTB, the Norwich diocese and St Thomas'. We are coming to work alongside those who have been faithfully serving here for many years and, whilst maintaining the traditional nature of some aspects of the church life, will also be bringing some contemporary ideas and practices into the worshipping and missional life of the church."

"Having come from HTB this will be in line with the ethos and vision there. The effectiveness of Alpha speaks for itself and we will certainly be running Alpha regularly, starting in the near future. We plan to start a contemporary morning service in mid April," said Ian.

"Over the next few months a few people from London will be joining us but this is primarily a local work. We think of ourselves as locals! My father was a Norfolkman, and Jo and I raised our two children during our 22 years in Norfolk before we went to theological college in Cambridge in 2008. It feels like coming home."

"There has been wonderful encouragement from many other local churches and church leaders, both Anglican and from other denominations, and we are really looking forward to working together with them all in unity and in faith that God is building His church right across this amazing city and county. People, mostly with historic HTB connections, and with a heart to see this work established in Norwich, are joining us in this adventure of faith."

www.stthomasnorwich.org

New Pope welcomed

NORFOLK: The election of the new Pope, Francis I, has been welcomed across Norfolk for underlining the church's commitment to social justice and bringing the appointment of a new Bishop for East Anglia a step closer.

Diocesan Administrator for the Roman Catholic Diocese of East Anglia, Fr David Bagstaff, based near Norwich, said: "Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio has taken the name of Francis, a saint noted for his simplicity of life and love of the poor and of the world in which we live. That simplicity of life and solidarity with the poor has already been reflected in the Pope's life. It reflects the Church's commitment to social justice as a central part of her proclamation of the Gospel of Christ."

"In East Anglia, as we continue our wait for a new bishop, it is particularly good news as it moves us one step closer to that appointment."

The election of a Latin American Pope has also been welcomed by the Norfolk-based former Anglican Bishop of Argentina, who has worked closely with Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio.

The Rt Rev David Leake, said: "Cardinal Bergoglio was very much focused on the poor and on human rights. He is a natural low profiler with humility, who would often travel on the bus or the underground for example."

GOOD NEWS

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■ The deadline for material for the Celebrate edition is Friday April 26. Distribution is from Saturday May 18.

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Imperfect people and impossible situations

■ Ever since Adam and Eve, God has used imperfect people, or desperate, impossible situations, or both, to bring about his redemptive purposes.

When Adam and Eve sinned there was a cataclysmic separation of creation from its creator, and the world plunged suicidally away from its original purpose.

God, grieving, sent the flood, but Noah (meaning comfort), would still carry hope for salvation. He wasn't perfect, not as Adam and Eve had been, but God could and would use him. Through Noah, comfort (hope) sprang forth.

Through biblical history, and since, God has used imperfect people and impossible situations, to bring about his redemptive purposes. We might say bringing life from death, hope from despair, is the way he most often does things; no situation or person is beyond his redemption.

Samuel, for instance, was miraculously conceived following the heartache and desperate cry of his barren mother Hannah, and later used by God to bring revival to all of Israel. Jacob was a liar and a thief, Rahab was a prostitute. Jesus was none of these things, but there are few more squalid or harrowing scenes than crucifixion.

Yet even here, as the sky darkened and His



Richard George is Director of The Way of the Spirit and Pastor of Cornerstone Church, Norwich.

father in heaven apparently deserted him, new hope sprang forth. As Jesus hung on the cross, a soldier put a spear in Jesus' side, drawing blood and water. John finds this so surprising that he takes the trouble to give credence to the testimony of the man who witnessed it.

That flow of blood from His side is easy to understand: it is the blood that cleanses us of sin, but the water?

A rather unnatural phenomenon, there's been much speculation about what it meant. Buried in the writings of the early church Fathers is the suggestion that John saw it as the life of the Holy Spirit beginning its flow from Jesus' side.

This makes good sense. The prophet Ezekiel, centuries earlier, had seen a river flowing from

the temple; Zechariah had prophesied of the day a fountain would begin to flow in Jerusalem and of course Jesus himself had earlier stood up in the temple courts, exclaiming that rivers of living water would flow from the inmost being of him who believes, adding that the Holy Spirit had not yet been given, but would be once Jesus had been glorified (crucified).

This stream from the side of Jesus would increase. He would breathe upon His disciples in the upper room where he appeared to them after his resurrection, and it would become a torrent at Pentecost, totally immersing the disciples and others who were with them in Jerusalem that day.

Jesus didn't just die so that our sins could be forgiven. He died so that God's life, the Holy Spirit, could be poured out in fulfilment of Joel's prophesy centuries earlier.

In the world there may be darkness but, especially where there is darkness, there is hope! God turned around Adam's error on the cross, and the power that would enable a people to be God's people began flowing as Jesus died.

Whatever impossible people or situations you may see around you this Easter, know for certain that God has already acted in history and has provided all you need today to see his redemptive purposes come forth. It is finished!

Escape to freedom

Polish welder **Tomasz Marszalek** had no idea what God had in store for him when he left his home city of **Szczecin** in 2007, heading for **Norwich** to escape a broken marriage, unemployment and a large court fine for drink driving. **Les Champion** reports.

An encounter with the Christian faith was the furthest thing in Tom's mind as he had absolutely no interest in religion. Life in Poland had become very difficult for the qualified foreman welder, following the collapse of his employer's business and the break-up of his marriage. Financial and social pressures were heavy, including a big court fine and six-month suspended sentence for drink driving.

He came to the UK, to Peterborough initially, and found work through a Polish agency, which sent him to Norwich. The job only lasted 2-3 weeks and then he was on the streets - destitute.

He started going to King's Care, which offers clothes washing, a shower, hot meal and company on Sunday afternoons at Kings Church in Norwich. He liked what he found, "this religion was nothing like the religion back home," said Tom.

It was as culturally different as the permitted visits to West Berlin in his youth and for Tom it was mind-blowing. As a consequence, he asked if he could help out in



Tomasz Marszalek outside the King's Centre.

the kitchen and gradually built up his contribution and relationships.

He went on an Alpha course, and decided that following Jesus and belonging to His family was what he wanted: "From the day I was baptised, everything has changed in my life," said Tom.

During this time, he managed to send the money to cover his court fine to a relative in Poland. The money was never handed over, which made Tom a 'wanted' man in his home country - a situation which unsettled him and

caused sleepless nights.

Tom was by now a member of Kings' conferencing staff. He consulted colleagues and elders of the church and decided to return to Poland to put things right. With their full support and encouragement, he returned to Poland on June 7 last year. Meanwhile, his solicitor in Poland was trying to get the jail sentence changed for electronic tagging, and Tom also paid the fine again, this time via his father, but it was too late, the legal wheels were already in motion.

Tom decided to enter his homeland by coach, there being less chance of detection at border control. God was with him.... There were 17 people on the coach, 14 had to surrender their passports for inspection, but Tom was waved through.

He spent three months keeping a low profile, waiting for a decision. Eventually he appeared in court, where the judge was so impressed, he asked Tom twice if he had come back voluntarily because he could not believe it.

Tom was tagged for six months and during this time, Kings Church sent three of his friends and colleagues to visit, support and encourage him in Poland.

After three months, Tom's solicitor applied for parole, which was granted. He returned to Norwich early in January, to a warm welcome from his colleagues and church family, and has now resumed his duties and his new life in Norwich.

"I am still surprised at the turn of events," said Tom. "I went back to Poland expecting prison, but the future is bright now! I am much happier setting out conference rooms at Kings than I was building petrol stations in Poland!"



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THORNTONS CHOCOLATES

Transforming Norwich has embarked on a new era with a new leadership, an amended constitution and an extended vision. **Jenny Seal** reports.



Rev Madeline Light
and Rev Mark
Fairweather Tall.

Mark leads new era at Transforming Norwich

On Sunday March 3, a gathering of around 30 people from churches and Christian organisations across the city met at St Stephens Church to agree the future of Transforming Norwich.

The Extraordinary General Meeting followed a nine-month organisational review led by retiring chair, Rev Madeline Light, who looked back at the journey the organisation has travelled.

The vicar of St Stephens reminded the group that Transforming Norwich had been borne out of what was Churches Together in Greater Norwich, expanding to include denominational churches, non-denominational churches and Christian organisations.

Madeline said: "It was a very active, vibrant group. Its vision was to promote unity through prayer and action. It did lots of things. It was a place of great initiation, initiating Network Norwich, Street Pastors, Foodbank and Celebrate to name but four; some tremendous things that we are still benefitting from now."

Transforming Norwich came to a crisis point at its AGM held last June, as Rev Madeline Light and other members of the Executive stepped down, with no one willing to stand to take the organisation forward.

A small group led by Madeline with Rev Canon Richard Capper, Pastor Trevor Pimlott, Rev Mark Fairweather Tall, Jill Gower and Rev Canon Simon Stokes were tasked with reviewing the future role and need for the organisation.

Madeline said: "We eventually concluded that it is still worthwhile because it is doing something that no other organisation does in the city."

"So having thought the unthinkable, we began to think what it was really good at doing now, even in its present form. We believe that one of its strengths is reaching out between the denominational churches and those that are not in denominations. It is a place where all meet together. By its very nature that is a quite a difficult thing to do and a very worthwhile thing to do."

Following unanimous agreement from the meeting, the Executive of up to eight church representatives and four Christian organisa-

tions, will now always include a representative of Norwich Central Churches Together, Celebrate and Unite. The vision has been extended to "promote unity through prayer, action and friendship". This change reflects the new focus of providing a forum for church leaders and Christian leaders in the city to get to know each other better.

The new Electorate, which was elected unanimously, includes:

- Rev Mark Fairweather Tall, Minister of Norwich Central Baptist Church as Chair
- Rev Canon Simon Stokes, Vicar of St Cuthbert's Church, Sprowston as Vice Chair.
- Phil Thorne, Senior Pastor of City Church
- Biddy Collyer of St Stephen's Church
- Clare Elkins, Leader of New Hope Christian Centre
- Nick Blanch, Director of Norwich YFC
- Jill Gower, Director of Call to Prayer
- Trevor Pimlott, Senior Pastor of Norwich Family Life Church
- Keith Morris, Publisher of Network Norwich & Norfolk
- John Betts, Director of Celebrate
- Rev Janet Wyer, Associate Priest of the Church of St Peter Mancroft

Rev Mark Fairweather Tall concluded the meeting by paying tribute to Madeline for all that she had contributed, commending her "wisdom, patience and vision for how things could progress with Transforming Norwich".

Mark went on to briefly outline his vision for the future of Transforming Norwich saying: "We hope we can bring people together. I believe it starts with the leaders of organisations and churches, so one of the things I'd like to encourage is church leaders and Christian leaders to get together."

He highlighted a lunch that Transforming Norwich with guest speaker Jeff Lucas has planned on Thursday May 16 for church leaders and leaders of Christian organisations throughout the city.

He said: "Although we represent very different churches, one of the things that unites us as church leaders is we have been called by God to serve in faith. And actually meeting together we can encourage one another in that; we can journey with one another and support each other. So my hope

is that this is just one of the things that we are doing which will encourage people to come together, to be together and then who knows where we go from there".

If you are a church or Christian leader in Norwich and would like to book a space for the Jeff Lucas lunch, to be held at the Norwich Family Life Centre, ring 01603 760 497 or email office@norwich.central.org.

The AGM for Transforming Norwich will take place on Friday June 7, 3pm at Celebrate with a talk from the Bishop of Norwich. Everyone is welcome.

New chair for TN

■ **NEW CHAIR:** Rev Mark Fairweather Tall, 39, takes on the role succeeding Rev Madeline Light who steps down after having served in the position since 2010.

"We are at an exciting time because just about everything that was organised by Transforming Norwich has now been laid down. We can look back at the past and celebrate that, but actually we have a new opportunity for how we move forward from here," said Mark, a Minister of Norwich Central Baptist Church.

Part of a small group of people tasked with deciding the future of Transforming Norwich over the last nine months, Mark explained: "We looked at a range of questions including whether there was any role left for Transforming Norwich and whether it should continue or whether it should stop. The feeling of the group was very much that it was important for it to continue. We want to see church leaders and Christian leaders across the city come together, build relationships and for this then to lead on to other things in the future."

Norwich became home for Mark in 2006 when he moved to become a Minister of Norwich Central Baptist Church; prior to which he was the Minister of Pershore Baptist Church in the West Midlands for six years. Alongside his pastoral ministry he is a trustee of Norwich Foodbank, the Chair of St Mary's Family Contact Centre and a regular columnist on the Network Norwich and Norfolk website.

What excites Mark most about taking on the new role is the importance of Transforming Norwich in providing a forum for church leaders and Christian leaders in the city to get to know each other better.

"I feel passionate about church leaders getting to know each other and enjoying each other's company, sharing good ideas with one another, learning from each other and encouraging one another. We all have the same responsibility of being called by God to be His light and serve Him as we seek to further His Kingdom. I just want to do anything that I can to facilitate that."

Mark will bring a characteristically consultative leadership style to the role of chair. While he has various ideas for how the vision and strategy could develop, he emphasises that the priority is to meet as a new Executive and to set a new agenda as a group.

"The Executive are meeting with a clean slate so some of this is about us getting together and seeking God's guidance and understanding where he might be leading us."

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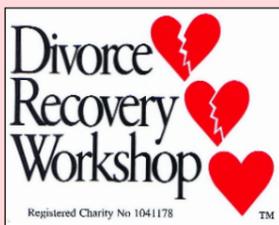
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With the internet becoming the new red light district, the Norwich-based **Magdalene Group** has secured £288,000 of funding to launch and run an innovative project to reach out and help young people at risk through online sex work. **Keith Morris** reports.

life and not enter sex work through lack of skills and education or low confidence and self-esteem.

"The Lottery funding allows us to develop cutting edge digital marketing strategies to reach women and young people caught up in on-line sexual exploitation or sex work by using search engine optimisation and pay-per-click advertising alongside creating a smartphone app in order to be innovative in ways of reaching the spiralling numbers," said Suzi.

Adolescents that take risks online, by having sexual chats or exchanging sexual images, are particularly prone to the increasingly sophisticated, coercive and sinister tactics of online predators, according to the Child Exploitation Online Protection Centre.

"The ROSE Project will provide an outreach and one-to-one service to those most 'at risk' of sexual exploitation, particularly care-leavers and young runaways," said Suzi, "as patterns emerge of on-street grooming such as driving around cities late at night, hanging around food outlets, hostels and bus stations. We want to establish trusting relationships to help them build a platform to address the issues in their day-to-day lives," said Suzi.

The ROSE Project was first introduced at the Magdalene Group AGM last June, when Gavin Shuker MP, the Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Prostitution and the Global Sex Trade said: "One of the biggest lies that is perpetuated, is that prostitution is the oldest profession and for that reason it is always with us and there is nothing you can do. I just fundamentally don't believe that is true."

"I think we should be angry. I think we should be angry that it's okay to go out and exploit women in this way. And I think that we should be angry enough to force us into action, to force the people around us to take action, to say that it's unjust."

www.rosecampaign.org
www.magdalengroup.org

The Big Lottery funded project will deliver cutting edge ways for staying safe from sexual abuse online, and providing services to those most at risk of sexual exploitation such as runaways and care leavers, specifically targeting those in Norwich and Norfolk.

The ROSE Project, which stands for Reaching Out on Sexual Exploitation, will be launching a new service with an innovative digital marketing strategy that will include using social media platforms to reach out to young people at risk of online sexual abuse and to young girls who are entering online sex work. It will also make use of paid advertising on Google to appear in searches above websites offering sexually exploitative services.

The Magdalene Group has a Christian ethos and has been working in the field of prevention and supporting those people affected by sexual exploitation for over 18 years.

It will also be launching the ROSE telephone helpline and internet live chat this spring to offer listening and support to young girls and women who feel they are being sexually exploited, coerced into sex or wanting to exit sex work.

Suzi Heybourne, Director of The Magdalene Group, said: "young girls are entering online sex work through web-cam without realising the dangers. What may seem a relatively safe way of sex working can soon turn into prostitution as women are encouraged to meet punters face-to-face."

"Not only that, we want young women to have all the opportunities open to them in



Reaching Out on Sexual Exploitation

Norfolk rector Jess retires after 34 years

By SANDIE SHIRLEY

Rector of Mulbarton, Rev Jess Stubenbord, and his wife Anne-Mary enjoyed a bumper retirement send-off on Saturday, February 23 at the village infant and junior schools before pursuing their plans to explore Eastern Europe in a camper van.

Jess, who has been in full-time Christian ministry for 34 years, officially said goodbye to parishioners at Mulbarton, and the other villages of Hethel, Bracon Ash and Flordon where he had been for nearly two decades.

The fond farewell included a celebration cake with vote of thanks, worship, thanksgiving and prayer followed by a supper presentation and barn dance.

Jess, who helped lead his wife to faith in Christ before they married, joined the Anglican Church after working with ex-offenders in residential care – the couple are still in contact with some of those ex-offenders countless years later.

"We have always been interested in people and wanted the freedom to share the gospel," he says. The door to the Anglican Church swung open, explains Jess. "It provided the freedom to share God's love through an open door into people's homes and we knew it was where God wanted us to serve."

Jess reflected on the last two decades at the parish church in rural South Norfolk where he preached for the last time on February 24: "It has been a joy to be surrounded by a great team of gifted people who have been willing to grow and reach out with the love of Jesus. The past year we have 'planted' a new church congregation and are taking Café Church into the heart of the community. Then in two smaller villages Messy Church has begun. So we praise God for signs of growth and pray for good fruit.

"As a minister, one of my greatest joys is seeing people grow in prayer and get to grips with God's word as they have the desire and see the need to grow spiritually and see their gifts develop to serve Jesus. However, there is also great frustration when this doesn't seem to happen."

Another frustration is the draining admin



Jess and Anne-Mary Stubenbord.

and medieval buildings work, explained Jess.

Mulbarton church has a diverse mix of families, youth and older people. "The youth are really going for God. Our youth worker is helping to fan their gifting into flame as God is evidently touching them," said Jess. "One young girl feels God's call to worship and has had a prophetic word about ministering in Africa and another lad, at 14, definitely feels God's call to preach, he said.

"During the years we have also been encouraged by the growing, good relationships with the schools and wider village community and so we are praying for a younger replacement to build and develop this," said Jess.

His Church of England ministry began with a curacy in Cromer and also included a hospital chaplaincy role at the James Paget Hospital. The Gorleston hospital job was "very

fulfilling". A small team would have the freedom to pray for vulnerable people from different backgrounds on Saturday evenings, taking the lover and healer of their souls into the hospital wards. In those days the hospital chaplain needed no appointment but nowadays you have to be summoned by a patient to attend, explains Jess. After this they spent eight years in Saxthorpe and surrounding villages in North Norfolk.

The couple plan to spend more time with family when they retire and tour Eastern Europe in a camper van. "I want to explore this part of Europe and see how the churches are faring. A long time ago I did a degree in French, German and Russian, so I am hoping to communicate a bit," said Jess. On their return the couple are waiting to see what God places on their heart in the way of voluntary service.

news in brief

Record-breaking Norwich bishop makes 20 years

■ NORFOLK: Twenty years ago, the Bishop of Norwich made it into the Guinness Book of World Records as the youngest bishop in the Church of England.

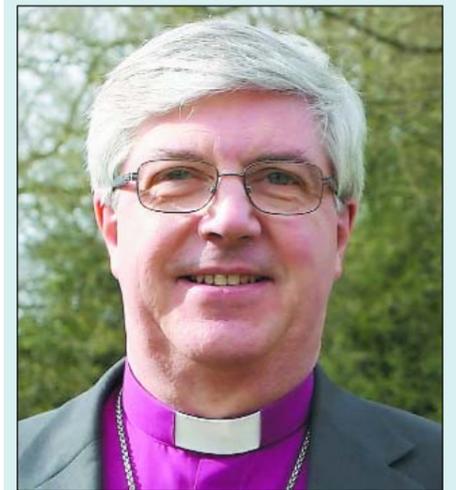
The Rt Rev Graham James has now marked 20 years as a bishop with an interview in the Eastern Daily Press.

Highlights have included the role he has played in the ordination of around 200 priests and his move to Norfolk from Truro in Cornwall in 1999.

"That was a wonderful moment," he said. "There are over 500 parishes within the diocese. Over the course of the time I have been here, the majority of the clergy I have either ordained or instituted – put into their parishes. I'm the longest-serving member of my senior staff."

"Of course, fewer people go to church regularly than they did years ago," said Bishop Graham. "People don't do things habitually in quite the same way," he said. "Sunday trading began the time I became a bishop. Sunday was a day of rest. Now it's a day of leisure activity and shopping. I have noticed a very different attitude to Sunday. That's a huge challenge to the Church."

"I'm the Bishop of Norwich, not just the bishop for the people who go to church," he said. "I think a bishop should be a bishop for the whole county and do as much as he can to be part of the wider community."



The Bishop of Norwich.



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Top novelist is new patron

■ **FOODBANK:** Best-selling novelist Susan Hill CBE whose books include *The Woman in Black*, *The Mist in the Mirror* and *I'm the King of the Castle*, has become a patron of Norwich foodbank, the Christian charity which provides emergency food to local people in crisis.

Susan joins the Rt Revd Graham James, Bishop of Norwich and Delia Smith CBE as patrons of the charity which distributes food boxes to people in need, following referral from care professionals.

The announcement came at the same time as the stage play *The Woman in Black* adapted from Susan Hill's best-selling novel was appearing at the Theatre Royal in Norwich. The play has been running for 23 years in the West End.

Grant Habershon, foodbank Project Manager, said: "Susan has for some time been a great friend to our local charity providing us with support and encouragement. We were thrilled when she told us she was moving to Norfolk and that this would allow her to be more involved with our foodbank and we are delighted that she has now agreed to become a patron."

Susan Hill said: "In a way I don't want to be a patron of



the Norwich foodbank because I would rather the Norwich foodbank didn't have to exist, and that no one was hungry. That we have people needing to ask for help from a foodbank in this prosperous country brings shame on us all.

"But given that it is there, I am so honoured and pleased to support this local charity, who do such great work in providing essential food supplies to many in need and who take time to listen and signpost clients to further support. I am shortly to become a Norfolk dweller and hope to give the foodbank all the help I can."

The Norwich foodbank continues to see an increase in demand with over 3,500 local people in need being given three days of food in the last six months.

Grant said: "With rising food

and fuel prices combined with static incomes, unemployment and significant changes to benefits coming into force in April, our care agency contacts warn us that they expect to have to refer even more local people in crisis to us as the year progresses. This means we unfortunately have to plan to provide food for at least 8,000 this year alone.

"The local community have been incredibly generous in their support for our charity as we aim to help our neighbours in need. However our current resources are struggling to meet the increase in demand we are seeing. Therefore we need to expand our organisation and so we are now appealing to local businesses and their staff asking if they could assist our local charity.

"Could they make us their charity of the year, let us have some storage space for some non-perishable food, loan us a van, have a regular food collection or organise a fund-raising event. If anyone is interested in discussing how they could help we would love to hear from them," said Grant.

To find out more about Norwich foodbank visit www.norwichfoodbank.co.uk, ring 01603 251733 or e-mail foodnorwichproject@hotmail.co.uk.

A faith that

I simply never read books, but this title is one that I have been waiting to read for over 16 years, in fact ever since I first met Pat just after her surprise (to her) appearance on Esther Rantzen's *Hearts of Gold* TV programme back in 1996.

Sitting in her Brundall lounge, surrounded by piles of charity documents, it was the first time I encountered this incredible Norfolk lady, who lives out her heart-felt Christian faith more than anyone I know.

Her passion for the orphans, the slumdogs, the elderly and the dying in the undescrivable slums and rubbish tips of Madurai and Trivandrum was evident from the moment she started speaking.

It was all-consuming and, as I grew to know Pat better, I realised how it simply had to be that way to keep driving her back time after time, flying half-way across the world to just be there for each individual she met.

Pat's modus operandi is simple - to reach out and love the individual right in front of her. From the teenage beggar dying of leprosy Pat met when she first stepped off a minibus on her initial trip, to the victims left homeless and without hope by the Asian tsunami and the elderly grannies who had nowhere to go and no-one to care for them until they met Pat.

Since an encounter with a missionary from India at the age of ten, Pat knew exactly what she was going to do with her life. But she had to fight through incapacitating illness and multiple rejections before jobs in a holiday camp, nurse training, hospital chaplaincy and for YMCA Norfolk, led to her first trip to India.

From the moment she came face-to-face with that first dying

The remarkable story of Norfolk minister Rev Canon Pat Atkinson, who has devoted the last 22 years of her life to reaching out to the untouchables in the slums of India, has now been told in full for the first time in a new autobiography. Keith Morris reports.

youngster, Pat's mission in life was divinely sealed.

Since then, in over 40 trips to India, first through the Cooper-Atkinson Charitable Trust for India and then the Vidiyal Trust, Pat and her many supporters have helped to establish homes, schools, care and tuition centres for orphans and Dalits (untouchables), feeding centres, medical clinics and outreach services for cancer and leprosy, and support for those affected by the tsunami in India and Sri Lanka.

Hundreds if not thousands of lives have been touched, many changed forever.

In 1997, Pat met a dying Mother Teresa, received her blessing and was told "Don't stop loving, don't stop loving".

Pat was awarded the MBE for her work with street children in 2007.

Author Carole Blackwell sums it up very well in her foreword to Pat's book, *Touched by Untouchables - My Life and Work in India*: "So many lives transformed because a Norfolk lady cared. It is the story of how an 'ordinary person' (as Pat

calls herself) can act with extraordinary courage and self-sacrifice to make a lasting impact for good in the lives of people who are lower than those at the very bottom of the caste system. It is one of those rare books that changes the way we think for ever."

The enduring legacy of the work can be judged by the fact that with three generations of youngsters, who previously had no future or hope, now passed through the charity's homes, over 50 of them have gained degrees of various kinds. They have gone on to become pastors, carpenters, electricians, mechanics, bank staff, textile designers and machinists. A significant number also continue to give voluntary help at the centres.

Pat does not preach to those she touches - her actions speak far louder than her words ever could. She writes: "I know that if Jesus came back tomorrow I wouldn't find him in Buckingham Palace, the Houses of Parliament or even in cathedrals and churches. I'd find him in the slums. That's where my faith lies and where I need to be."

At the age of 65 you would think that Pat has more than played her part and is considering stepping back: "Perhaps in five more years", she said. "But while there is an old lady to hug, a child to cuddle and while I can support my wonderful friends. Who knows."

■ **Touched by Untouchables - My Life and Work in India** by Pat Atkinson, published by Connaught Books at £8.50 is available in Norfolk bookshops or online at Connaught Books.

■ You can read more about the work of the Vidiyal Trust at www.vidiyaltrust.com

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Double cancer struggle

Steve Rayner was an angry man when he first heard of his wife's skin cancer soon after their first baby was born. Sandie Shirley reports.

■ It seemed a cruel blow, especially for a young Norfolk couple who had devoted much of their lives to helping young people grow in faith through various Christian organisations.

"I was bitter and resentful towards God as the tears flowed down my face while driving back from work that day; I took it very hard," says Steve, whose teenage sweetheart, Ann, was given just a 50 per cent chance of survival.

As they talked that night about the shocking realities, an unexpected telephone call heralded peace, power and hope. Steve, a board member of Norwich Youth for Christ, received a simple prayer request for the director's young daughter. At the same time he was asked if he had any personal

requests. Suddenly, the couple's cancer struggle was not their own. A global prayer hot-line was mobilised within 24 hours and they knew and felt its immediate impact.

"Despite my initial resentment God still loved us and poured out his provision and he proved how good he is," says Steve, who would never have activated the growing chain of willing prayers without that telephone call.

"We saw that God was with us every step of the way. Situations against all the odds were resolved as people, including the youth group we had led, prayed for specific outcomes," adds Ann.

She was given a private room so she could feed her six-week-old baby and Steve could be at her bedside day and

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- "The street volunteers know what friendship is and that is what they are offering in some of the busiest places which are also some of the loneliest."
Bishop of Norwich, The Rt Rev Graham James
- "The street volunteers really are 'the stars of the night'. It was a pleasure and a privilege to go out with them for an evening."
Charles Barratt, High Sheriff of Norfolk
- "They are a inspiration to everyone."
Jemma, Norwich nightclubber

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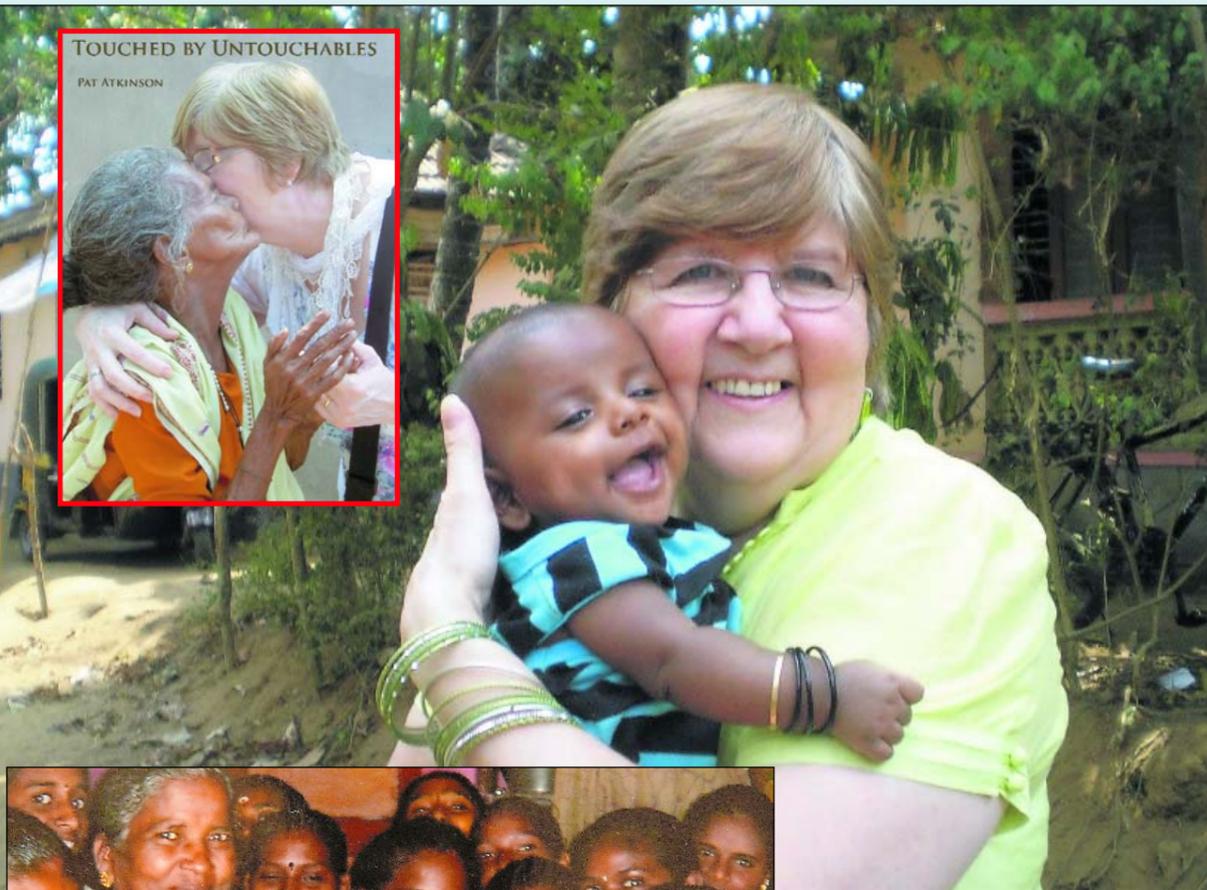
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Rev Canon Pat Atkinson with grannies and orphans out in India.



strengthens faith of couple

night. The hospital had no provision for children but in the weeks before Ann's admission a midwife and a paediatrician had been miraculously transferred to the ward to gain experience and Ann was taken to the operating theatre by a Christian porter.

Today, Ann has a large scar on her leg. It will always be a reminder of God's faithful provision and "is part of who I am", explains the mother of two, who teaches in a local school. But while preparing for her son's wedding, and studying for an education degree, cancer struck again two decades later. After attending a Leadership conference where there was a session on healing, Ann faced two invasive operations and radiotherapy to remove breast cancer

three years ago, as she continued with the busy season of her life.

"Although cancer has tested our faith on two occasions, I would not have been without either of them because God has been so close and taught me things that I could not have learnt in any other way," said Ann.

"I don't believe God made me ill but I believe God walked with me through those times and I am a different person now. I have wanted to learn those valuable lessons of trust and in both circumstances I have only been able to fully appreciate what has gone on afterwards, with reflection, and it has been a privilege because cancer has not been the end but the journey," says Ann.



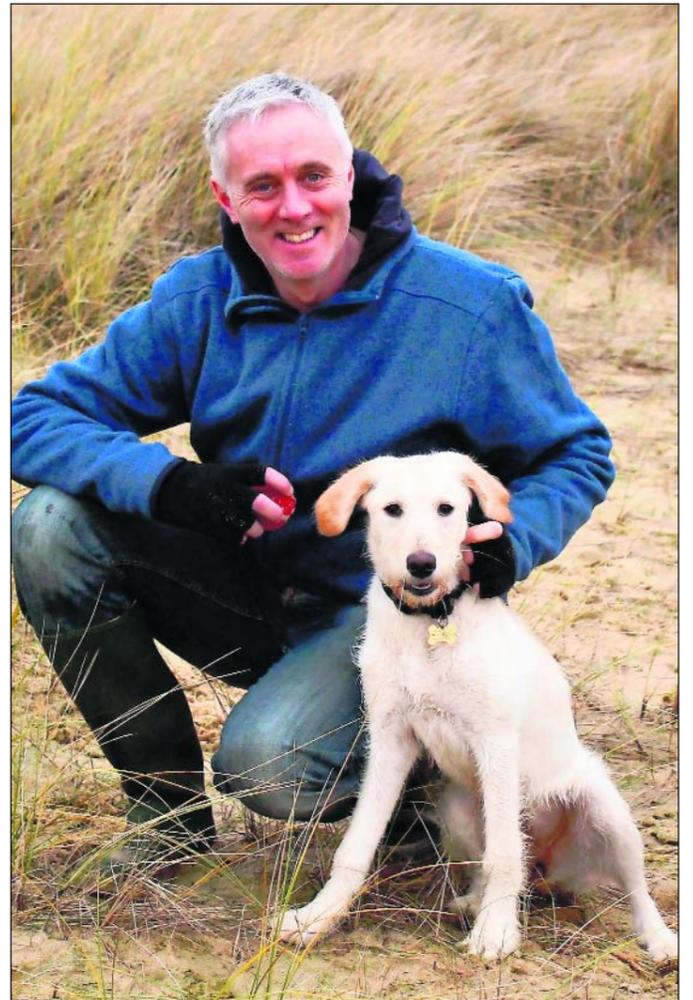
Ann and Steve Rayner.

A roller-coaster of faith

Former UEA student and successful Norwich business man Martin Kentish used to describe himself as a hostile anti-God skeptic. That was before he met his Maker at Norwich train station. Kevin Gotts reports.

One Friday morning, back in 2007, Martin was waiting on the platform at Norwich railway station when a man came up to him asking if he was a Catholic priest. "Ever so sorry, I couldn't be further from holiness, I'm in marketing and don't believe in all that God stuff," Martin replied. The stranger began to talk about Jesus and before Martin could eye up the train for a quick escape, he was handed a booklet to read. Halfway through reading the cover story he was flooded with an incredible sense of being loved that nearly drove him to tears. On the following Monday, Mike, the manager of the local coffee shop, put his hand on Martin's shoulder and said: "I know what you are going through right now. That's God's Holy Spirit." Again Martin felt that same incredible sense of being loved. This time he gave in, "He had got me and I wanted to know who He was!" Next day in a car park, he received a call from that gentleman who he met on the train; a chap called John Wright, and gave his life to Christ

over the phone. "My exciting, difficult journey to walk as a follower of Christ began." "I've come to realise just how much God wants to have an authentic, personal relationship with me. The creator of the universe, the heavenly father, the perfecter of everything is interested in me? Wow, when the depth of that sinks it, it is incredibly moving and humbling," he continues. Since then Martin feels he has made many mistakes in his walk with God. "The funny thing is God loves me enough to give me the freedom to mess up, but He is always there as a loving Father to take me back in, battered and bruised from trying to do it my way," said Martin. His business life has also been affected: "Daily I look around and marvel at God's creation, so I am blessed at seeing so many pointers to Him. I've changed from filling my wallet with cash as being the driver, to honouring Him in whatever I do and how I respond to who I work with," explains Martin. He now enjoys reaching out to people with the truth and seeing them respond: "What I would say to anyone is first get to know Him and realise just how much He loves you. Growing trust comes from a greater knowing of how much He loves us. The rollercoaster is just His way of making you more like Jesus."



Martin Kentish with his dog Leia.

Norfolk helps charity reach 100m children

NORFOLK: Operation Christmas Child has reached the milestone of delivering 100 million shoeboxes to needy children around the world thanks to the support of people and churches across Norfolk. Since 1990, through Operation Christmas Child, the Christian-based Samaritan's Purse has been providing these simple gifts to children in over 100 countries. More than 14,200 gift-filled shoeboxes from across Norfolk have been exported to vulnerable children in Serbia and Ukraine. They were sent from processing centres in Norwich and Peterborough as part of one of the UK's largest annual children's charity projects. Norfolk Regional Manager for Operation Christmas Child, Gordon McCann, said: "I would like to thank the volunteers at our local collection sites and all those who packed an Operation Christmas Child shoe box gift. For some of the children who receive these gifts, this shoe box will be the first gift they have ever received. Thank you again to everyone who took part in this project. A simple gift, packed with love, can communicate hope to children worldwide. "We're so grateful that despite the recession and the hardship everyone is feeling people have really gone the extra mile this year to pack shoe boxes with love." www.operationchristmaschild.org.uk

Norwich worst for child poverty

NORWICH foodbank is gearing up to provide food to 60% more families in 2013 after Norwich was named as having the worst child poverty rates in the East of England. The Campaign to End Child Poverty produced a report in February 2013 which splits the East of England into 47 local authorities covering such places as Bedford, Brentwood, Chelmsford Colchester, Great Yarmouth, Ipswich, Luton, Peterborough and Watford. However Norwich was named as the authority with the highest percentage of children in poverty in the East of England. The figures also show that our city is in the top 5% of authorities in the UK for child poverty. This was not however a surprise for the Norwich foodbank, where many local families are being referred to them by care agencies every week. Over 1,000 local children have been helped by their foodboxes in the last six months. The foodbank also sees a sharp increase in referrals every August when children are on school holidays and are no longer eligible for free school meals. Foodbank project manager, Grant Habershon said: "The recession throws up many statistics but at our Distribution Centres we meet the people behind these figures. We hear about the day-to-day struggles of families on low incomes – many of them in work. We meet parents who regularly miss meals so



that their children can do sport or hobbies that will keep them off the streets. Others tell us about how they have to tell their children they cannot afford a school trip or even to have a friend round for tea."

In April 2012 research released by The Prince's Trust and the Times Educational Supplement showed that almost half school teachers regularly witness pupils coming into school suffering from malnutrition or showing signs that they haven't eaten enough. The School Food Trust, which advises the Government about children's nutrition, said for far too many children a free school meal was their only proper meal of the day and the Founder of the Kids Company, Camila Batmanghelidjh said, "We are seeing responsible

parents who are not managing to have food in the house." In 2012, the charity Save the Children launched a campaign to help youngsters in Britain for the first time in its 93-year history. Their chief executive Justin Forsyth said: "Poverty is tearing families apart, with parents buckling under the pressure of mounting bills and children seeing their parents argue more about money. We need to help poor families survive the recession." Child Poverty damages children's experiences of childhood and harms their future life chances. A male in the Mile Cross area can expect to live ten years less than a male in Eaton. In all of the following Norwich wards more than 1 in 3 children live in poverty according to the Campaign to End Child Poverty figures. In Mile Cross 40% of children live in poverty, in Wensum 37%, Mancroft 36%, Bowthorpe 35%, University 35% and Lakenham 34%. The report is worrying but with static incomes and with food and energy prices continuing to increase will the situation worsen? Significant benefit changes coming into effect in April this year will also affect many poor families. With this backdrop the Norwich foodbank is gearing up to provide food to 60% more families in 2013 than they did last year. www.endchildpoverty.org.uk www.norwichfoodbank.co.uk



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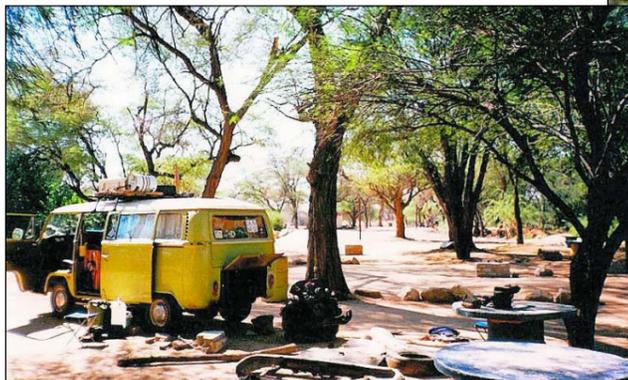
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Toby Stanwell-Smith and, above, his African campervan adventure.

Search for adventure led Toby to God

Father of four, **Toby Stanwell-Smith**, is a church youth worker who is devoted to telling youngsters about the one who made a constant play for his life and lifted him from reckless living. **Sandie Shirley** reports.



I was as stubborn as a rock but God had to nudge me time and time again to get me to take notice but I thank him every day for it, says Toby, who was once a bored teenager who got his kicks from drugs, parties and the dance scene.

Toby organised the raves and was involved in the world of drugs but to quench his thirst for adventure he planned a trip to South Africa. He toured the country with his girlfriend in a refitted camper van on a six-month life-changing trip that began when Toby, at 19, used his earnings as a used car sales man and some inheritance money.

"I wasn't looking for anything; I was happy with life and had a place at my chosen university. Africa was a chance to explore but God chose to pursue me and show me that there was more to my life and what living life to the full really means," says Toby.

When the camper van continually broke down, he made contact with Christians who had found joy and purpose. They included ex-ravers; a heavily tattooed ex-pimp and a hit-man turned evangelist. Try as he might to ignore them, Toby no longer saw these meetings as coincidences.

"We met a lot of Christians who had amazing stories to tell and I could see there was something they had that I didn't. It happened so many times, including when we needed to ask for directions at the first village we found for 200 miles and the van dumped its oil. Another time we drove eight hours through the bush before coming to a halt just short of a camp site in Zimbabwe," says the member of Hope Community Church, Wymondham.

The camp site was a resting place for the next few weeks but when the van's alternator bearings exploded and were beyond Toby's repair the couple were forced to stay put for another few days.

The delay was timely. Toby and girlfriend Hannah, who had partially slipped away from her Christian faith, met an international speaker and evangelist who arrived at the camp the night before with a team of students.

"We chatted and spent the next few days hanging out together. I could see they had a deep joy and peace. They talked openly about Jesus and several of them had turned from a life like mine and never looked back."

Toby was given a Bible. "I was asked to read a little and make a decision of my own rather than follow the crowd." A month later, he and Hannah drove 6000km across dirt roads to the evangelist's training school in Cape Town just as the van that had taken them on their epic travels finally died.

"I spent every night talking to guys about their faith. It took that long for me to ask all my questions but I finally realised that not only was it true but I needed to do something. Jesus had died for me and life is more than we see around us. There is life after death and only Jesus can be trusted with our eternity. I gave my heart and life to my Saviour and was baptised a week before flying home to England."

Toby returned to education but renounced his old ways. Instead he became involved with the Christian Union leadership and helped to lead a mission trip to Rwanda before marrying his friend and Christian partner, Hannah.

"I am not perfect, I am still learning and there have been hard times since becoming a Christian but they are far outweighed by my faith," says Toby.

Project aims to help churches do youth work

■ NORWICH: Norwich Youth for Christ (NYFC) is launching an innovative new project that seeks to resource churches with part-time youth workers. 'F2' enables churches which want to engage with young people, but are just starting out or would like some additional guidance, through a partnership arrangement with NYFC.

For many years NYFC has partnered with churches using full-time workers in their Fusion programme, which mixes city evangelism with placements in local church communities. A growing number of churches have been enquiring about workers and support in this area.

Nick Blanch, director at NYFC, said: "I was having a number of conversations with church leaders who wanted to do some youth work but because it was new territory, weren't sure on going straight in with a full-time worker. They were looking for something in the middle, to get them started on the path. Rather than just offering full-time workers, we had to be able to offer something else."

F2 projects are funded by the church and NYFC will recruit, train and manage a part-time worker to achieve certain aims.

"Because the projects are small, each one is quite specific and focused, and is based on what the church feels it can deliver and the needs of the local community. It's very much about strong dialogue and relationship between what we can offer and where the church is best placed to deliver."

"Youth work is more than just about an individual. It's about galvanising the whole church to engage in some way. That's why it has to be a partnership," said Nick.

The project is being piloted with Holy Trinity Church in Rackheath and, if successful, NYFC hopes to see more F2 launches in the future.

Rev Lorna Allies said: "Holy Trinity, Rackheath, is a lively and happy church fellowship. We have people of different ages in our congregation and a monthly family church which is attended by families with younger children. We hope that our youth worker will bridge the gap and connect with the younger people in our community. We will encourage and accommodate new ideas and we believe that God is calling us all to open the church community to younger people."

To find out more about the work of Norwich YFC, visit: www.norwichyfc.co.uk

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Top cop's sporting crime fight

Former senior Met Policeman Steve Gaskin has strengthened his determination to divert children and young people from a life of crime and prostitution. **Peter Barnes reports.**

Since his retirement from the force, Norfolk-based Steve Gaskin has initiated a number of teaching and training programmes based on his expertise and experience in Forensic Science.

As a Scotland Yard Detective Chief Inspector, Steve was applying his efforts to dealing with serious and often dangerous offenders.

Now, as a man on fire for God, he is channelling his energies in schemes to help prevent youngsters from becoming gangsters not just in the UK but also in Bulgaria. For the past three years, coupling his attributes as a senior Police Officer, teacher and martial arts coach, Steve has devoted time, energy and other resources into improving the quality of life for scores of young people housed in a children's home in Bulgaria.

As part of a larger team from Norwich and Redhill, the Norwich Central Baptist Church member and youth leader has introduced a completely new dimension to the already active holiday club programme in a remote village called Burzitsa.

Building on existing sporting activities such as football, basketball and rounders, all played on a very dangerous concrete surface, Steve has introduced Taekwondo for the older pupils and specialist

forensic crafts for the younger element.

The life-changing experience for the children has become a life-changing crusade for Steve. Living in Taverham, married to a former Metropolitan Police Sergeant and having three adult daughters, he has seen how comparatively small and inexpensive resources can open up a new way of life for the deprived children.

Right Anglia Events, the firm he and his wife head up, has launched a new education pack called 'Toes for Turf' - an exciting teaching resource enabling students to examine the uses of fingerprints and footprints in forensic science in a fun filled way. It is hoped that with the proceeds from this initiative, a completely new multi-activity all weather surface can be constructed at the institution.

"The pitch will make a huge difference to the lives of all the children at Burzitsa," said Steve. "They will be able to play football and other energy-sapping games, free from the physical dangers that the present surface entails."

Eight of the older boys have already been selected to play in a national tournament in Sofia and with a new surface to train on, this number could easily increase.

www.rightanglia.co.uk



Steve Gaskin teaching Taekwondo to Bulgarian youngsters at the orphanage.

Chaplains on hospital call

■ When someone from your family, church or community is admitted to hospital, there is a team of chaplains and volunteers ready and willing to provide a visiting service in hospitals right across Norfolk. Eleanor Langan, Lead Chaplain Norfolk and Norwich University Foundation Hospital Trust, answers some questions about the service.



Inside the chapel at the NNUH are hospital chaplains, from the left, Jane Nursey, Bill Bazeley, Stella Green, Bishop Jonathan, Eleanor Langan, John Ashe, Janet Stewart, Pauline Greasley and Nick Collision.

Q Is there a chaplain in the hospital?

A In our larger hospitals, the Norfolk and Norwich, the Queen Elizabeth at King's Lynn and the James Paget at Gorleston, there is a chaplain available every day and a message can be left on an answer machine if they are not in the office.

For smaller hospitals there will be a chaplain, though they may be part-time and it may not be possible to arrange a visit immediately. Nevertheless if you ring the hospital they should be able to give you a contact number

Q Does the person have to go to church to be visited by a chaplain?

A No not at all, we can be a bridge between you and the person in hospital. By mentioning your name we can show your concern for those from your community. The patient may welcome visits from a chaplain, especially if they are lonely or thinking about matters of faith. A time in hospital may be an opportunity to think more deeply about spiritual matters. Occasionally a patient may refuse further visits from the chaplain, but he/she may be glad to have been remembered by you.

Q Who will visit?

A It is likely that the first encounter will be with a chaplain who is an ordained member of one of the recognized Christian churches. A trained volunteer may be asked to follow up with subsequent visits. These volunteers enjoy using their pastoral gifts and it may be you know someone who would enjoy this role and could join us.

Q What happens if the patient is from another faith?

A A chaplain should be able to contact other faith representatives who can come into the hospital. Chaplains are in hospitals to support anyone within the community irrespective of their belief system.

Q What do chaplains offer?

A Chaplains are patient-led and so are prepared to listen to stories which sometimes involve painful and complex emotions. They help people find meaning and purpose in their situation and aim to be accepting and compassionate.

In the larger hospitals there may be a Sunday service to attend and certainly chaplains offer Holy Communion at the bedside, anointing and prayers. Chaplains are used to discerning a patient's tradition, so they may use formal or free prayers. They may sit quietly with a patient and simply hold a hand or offer a quiet blessing.

Q Are chaplains employed only for patients?

A No, we are available for families or carers as well as staff within the hospital. It may be that the patient is unconscious, but the chaplain is needed to help those around the bedside to come to terms with a difficult situation.

Next time you hear about someone in hospital why not call a chaplain?

■ Here are some contact details:

The Norfolk and Norwich University NHS Hospital Foundation Trust – 01603 287470
The James Paget University Hospitals, NHS Foundation Trust – 01493 452408
The Queen Elizabeth Hospital NHS Foundation Trust King's Lynn – 01553 613441

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We know you will have questions, so in the first instance please look at www.ymca-norfolk.org.uk/questions then if you are still interested please fill out the online enquiry form or contact

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referralteam@ymca-norfolk.org.uk
www.ymca-norfolk.org.uk



Pictured is action from last year's Celebrate Norwich & Norfolk event at the Forum.

Celebrating faith, families and unity

Details of the Celebrate Norwich & Norfolk 2013 event from June 7-9 have been revealed, together with an appeal to churches, Christian organizations, musicians and performers to join the popular festival.

The 2013 event will take place at The Forum and on Millennium Plain in Norwich city centre with the exhibition and performance programme on Friday June 7 and Saturday June 8 and an open-air celebration service on Millennium Plain on Sunday June 9.

The main theme is Celebrating Families and particular contributions to that strand are welcomed, although the event will not just be restricted to that area.

Plans have also been revealed to add the newly restored and re-opened St Stephen's church at Chapelfield to the venues used for an extended Christian services and resources exhibition to showcase churches, Christian organisations and businesses to the public and

By KEITH MORRIS

exhibition spaces are still available.

Exhibitors already booked include: City Saints in Action, The Good News, The Norfolk Postal Bible School, Healing Rooms, Foodbank, Norwich Baptist and URC churches, Christian Concern, UCB, Norfolk Street Partnership, Diocesan Youth Service, Mothers Union, Community Action Norwich, Collins Carpet Care, Hope into Action, All Hallows and Belsey Bridge.

Project director, John Betts, said: "We provide an exciting opportunity to increase the profile and raise awareness of the work local and national Christians groups are doing. The event is a unique combination of social action organisations, evangelism, resources, the arts and local churches, all together at a major event, in the public arena. We are celebrating faith in action and unity across the Christian

community."

Choirs, music and drama groups are also being sought to perform on Millennium Plain on the Friday and Saturday. Groups already booked include St Nicholas, N Walsham, Sheringham Gospel Choir, NYFC Gospel Choir, Marlpit Community Choir and Back2front

"The coming together of such a wide range of churches and ministries is a powerful tool for evangelism in the heart of our city and county," said John. "We would love to have your group take part with us this year."

For more details of taking part in the exhibition, and advertising in the special Celebrate edition of Good News for Norwich & Norfolk, please can contact administrator Jenny Drake on 01603 617905 or atjenny.nhcc@virgin.net

A preview video of the Christian community festival has been released and can be viewed at www.celebratenorfolk.co.uk

Saviour show set for hospital chapel

■ **NORWICH:** An Easter performance of readings and music will take place in the Norfolk & Norwich University Hospital Chapel on Wednesday March 27 with proceeds going to the NNUH Slipper Appeal.

The performance, entitled 'Saviour', will highlight some of the significant events of Christ's life, leading up to his death and resurrection.

The event is timed to happen during the week before Easter Day, and promises to be an entertaining and thought-provoking opportunity to reflect on the season. All are welcome to attend.

The performance has been put together by Peter Taylor, a member of St Edmund's Church in Taverham, and will be performed by members of that church, including Vicar Revd Paul Seabrook.

Afterwards there will be a voluntary collection on behalf of the NNUH Slipper Appeal. The Hospital Chaplaincy is working with the Occupational Therapy Department to provide slippers for those patients who need a sturdy pair of slippers to help with their mobility and get them back on their feet.

The performance starts at 6pm and should last about an hour-and-a-half, and will include an interval for refreshments. Entrance is free

One man passion play

■ **THETFORD:** On the evening of Easter Sunday, there is an open invitation to come and experience the acclaimed one-man passion play, 'Impossible God' written by Christian broadcaster Frank Topping and performed by his son Mark in Thetford.

The play re-enacts the story of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Thetford Christians Together (TCT) are hosting the professional performance on Sunday March 31, 7pm at the Church on the Way, IP24 2JZ. The performance is free.

A seriously funny evening is promised

■ **NORWICH:** Best-selling Christians authors Adrian Plass and Jeff Lucas are coming to Norwich Central Baptist Church on Thursday May 16, on their Seriously Funny tour.

Renowned for their quick wit and incisive wisdom, the duo will engage in an evening of unscripted, spontaneous conversation that includes story-telling, poetry and banter, creating a warm, intimate evening that swings from laugh-out-loud moments as well as times of tearful reflection. Breathtakingly honest about themselves, the duo will reveal some of their most embarrassing confessions and funniest moments.

In the second half of the evening, the audience sets the agenda, texting or writing in questions for Adrian and Jeff to respond

to - some edge-of-the-seat moments are guaranteed!

Adrian and Jeff are joined on the tour by award-winning musician Nicki Rogers.

Adrian Plass is a writer and speaker who has produced over 30 books in the last 20 years. The best known of these is 'The Sacred Diary of Adrian Plass', a gentle satire on the modern church, which has sold hundreds of thousands of copies worldwide.

Jeff Lucas is an international author, speaker and broadcaster. He is the author of 22 books and also broadcasts weekly radio shows throughout Europe on Premier and UCB Radio in Australasia, and on Revelation TV worldwide. He is a monthly contributor to Christianity Magazine.

Their books written together began when Adrian and Jeff started exchanging letters, determined to tell the truth - and the funny side - about their experiences as Christians. Their first book together, 'Seriously Funny: Life, Love and God - musings between two good friends' was the result.

Adrian and Jeff decided to take their conversation and story telling on the road, and the 'Seriously Funny' evening was born. Many thousands have attended these evenings during previous tours, with most venues selling out weeks ahead.

To order tickets for the evening, which begins at 7.30pm, go online to www.seriouslyfunny.org or call the ticket hotline 01254 368709. Tickets are £12 plus £1 booking fee.

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Homelessness focus for YMCA Sleep Easy

By KEITH MORRIS

A small city of cardboard shelters sprang up overnight at Carrow Park in Norwich and St John's Church, King's Lynn at the start of February when around 90 people spent the night sleeping under the stars to help raise awareness of the issue of homelessness in Norfolk, as part of the YMCA Norfolk Sleep Easy event.

The Community Sports Foundation football pitch next to Norwich City's Carrow Road stadium was filled with YMCA Norfolk supporters and staff, being sponsored to spend the night sleeping rough in the rain, snow and freezing temperatures as part of the fourth such annual event.

This year, teams from City College, Arcadis, Hilltop Café, Thurlow Nunn, Insight Financial Associates, PriceWaterhouseCoopers, Thorpe House Langley School and the University of East Anglia were among 74 people who took up the challenge and helped to raise over £14,000 to help tackle the issue of homelessness in Norfolk.

Angie Pimlott, a teacher at Thorpe House Langley School, said: "Each of our classes sponsored a teacher and there were ten of us here last night. Taking part in this challenge has really brought our school community together and shown the children that we are prepared to do something that is uncomfortable to help make a difference. It has also brought our team closer together."

Sharon Hollinger, marketing manager for Insight Financial Associates, said: "We are here to make a difference and raise the issue of homelessness in our city. It's going to be a long night. I am feeling cold already, it's wet and will be a big challenge but we want to raise as much money as possible for this great cause."

Chris Maw, senior partner with PriceWaterhouseCoopers, said: "We think it is very important to help the YMCA in terms of getting people off the streets. This is my first experience of sleeping out rough overnight, but we are not living in the conditions that people on the streets have to endure and it's only for one night."

YMCA Norfolk chief executive, Tim Sweeting, said: "It is great to have the support of such a wide range of people and companies and although it is not the same as sleeping rough on the streets, our hope is that participants will get some kind of insight into what it is like to be homeless, cold and hungry on the streets - something which happens every single night of the year in Norwich."

YMCA communications and fundraising manager, Susie Knights, said: "It was bitterly cold with snow and rain and those who did manage to get a couple of hours sleep woke up to a frosty reception. But the money we have raised will make a real difference in the lives of disadvantaged young people locally."

"Homeless people on our streets of course



Pictured are scenes from the YMCA Norfolk Sleep Easy event in Norwich and King's Lynn. Pictures by Julia Holland.



face many different problems and we have a significant number of people accessing our services all year round. All money raised from this event will go towards the work of YMCA Norfolk including the supported accommodation we provide for over 220 people every night who might otherwise be homeless."

Staff and residents from YMCA Norfolk in King's Lynn held their own Sleep Easy event raising almost £1000.

The group slept outside overnight in the grounds of St John's Church, adjacent to The Walks near the centre of King's Lynn. It was led by Julian Bright, Area Director - King's Lynn and West Norfolk and he was joined by key worker Sandra Ferreira and four young people - Richard, Harry, Kym and Michael.

www.ymca-norfolk.org.uk/sleepeasy

£500k appeal launched to save Norwich churches

■ NORWICH: A £500,000 appeal has been launched to help save four of Norwich's historic churches for future generations to enjoy.

The Norwich Historic Churches Trust (NHCT) needs the money to renovate and add modern facilities to the medieval churches so that it can find new tenants for them.

St Margaret's in St Benedict's Street, which hosts exhibitions in the summer months, St John de Sepulchre in Ber Street, which is empty, St Gregory's in Pottergate, and St Clement's on Colegate, which is used by the Romanian Orthodox congregation, need the money so they can be used by the community.

If the trust raises the £125,000 needed for each to install a water supply, toilets, heating and kitchens, then the churches can be rented out - keeping them in use and providing income which will then be pumped back into the building's maintenance.

Vice-chairman of the NHCT, Felicity Hartley, said: "They were designed as community buildings in the Middle Ages and we would like really to go back to that and make them have that vibrant quality that can be shared with the people in the neighbourhood. Churches are a wonderful asset. They are huge responsibility as well."

You can find more details at www.norwich-churches.org or donate at <https://mydonate.bt.com/charities/nhct>



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