

*Stockton Town Pastors***NEWSLETTER**Website: www.stocktontownpastors.co.uk**THE STORY SO FAR**

Stockton Town Pastors, it seems, are now an integral part of the Friday night scene and we are regularly approached by those 'out on the town' and thanked for the help and support we give to those in need; as well as lending a friendly ear to those who just want to chat. Our café in Stockton Parish Church Hall on Fridays is starting to become a spot for regular visitors—people who we have helped in the few weeks that we have been operating. These include a young man who was extremely distressed and at the point of attempting to end his life; and an Iranian refugee who was in need of friendship. It is so pleasing to know that we are making a positive contribution, especially when this is recognised by the public themselves.

Our relationships with the Police, taxi drivers, licensed premises door staff and food outlet workers continue to be forged. The Police have started to 'refer' individuals to us who are just in need of help and support, and we have also been called into licensed premises by door staff to help with someone who was drunk and in need of care. We have even had the need to call upon the Social Services Emergency Duty Team to secure accommodation for one homeless person we found sleeping rough, and were openly welcomed by them (this person is now a resident at 'Turn Around Homes').

Of course, Stockton Town Pastors can in the main only deal with the immediate needs of those we help. We are increasingly aware that many individuals who approach us are in need of longer term professional care and support—ranging from alcohol dependence to homelessness and those with mental health needs. It is with this in mind that our Steering Group has embarked upon a process of speaking with other local Christian organisations (resulting from a forum held by the Albert Dicken Trust) such as A Way Out, Daisy Chain, Sowing Seeds, Cross Rhythms and Youth For Christ; all of whom seek to work in a more coordinated way to offer support to the residents of Stockton and beyond.

Stockton Borough Council are seeking to make use of one or more vacant shop fronts on the High Street, and are open to extending this facility to Stockton Town Pastors as an operating base. The Council are themselves suppliers of a wide range of public services and we continue to meet on a monthly basis to examine more ways in which we can work closely together.

The Police continue to be of real help, primarily through Inspector Andy Fox but with the support of his senior management team and all officers and staff. Our patrol teams always receive a police briefing on each of the evenings we patrol; and volunteer training in respect of conflict management and dynamic risk assessment—together with an awareness of liquor and taxi licensing—has proved to be of real value.

The most valuable resource that Stockton Town Pastors has is its volunteers—there are currently forty one people who are actively involved in patrols, with training being offered to more within the next few weeks. Although volunteers are accepted from across the whole community regardless of their faith (or even if they are of no faith), all of these currently represent 13 different Christian churches in the Stockton area. These numbers have allowed the Steering Group to make the decision to extend our patrols to include Saturday evenings, from 6th March 2010.

If you would like to join us in patrols, or wish to know more about our organisation, please don't hesitate to visit our website. We are currently funded by donations from local churches and individuals, but have recently received our first official sponsorship from 'Safe in Tees Valley', an independent community safety partnership focused upon reducing crime, antisocial behaviour and increasing public safety. As our presence on the streets of Stockton grows, and increased involvement with other 'helping' organisations and services, we will need to identify appropriate funding in support of our activity. If, as an individual or a business or other organisation, you would like to support us in this way, then please visit our website for further information.

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It seems that the terms ' Stockton Town Pastors' and 'Snow' are inextricably linked, with both arriving (and remaining) on Stockton High Street about the same time. However, our resilience has won through and the white stuff has eventually disappeared. The slippery conditions underfoot made our alternative footwear very popular, and requests for 'flip-flops' are running high. In fact it has been suggested we should have them slightly remodelled and printed with our own STP logo so that they will complement the 'Jimmy Choo' shoes as worn by all of the best dressed ladies on their night out!



This attempt a creativity is only in response to other initiatives, though—Hull's Princes Avenue Street Angels have been taking the problem of volunteer shortage quite seriously and have come up with a potential solution, although I suspect there may be a flaw in the plan! However there are reports that these hardy specimens are keen to stay out on the street long after 3am, and never leave their post.



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Stockton Town Pastor Training

A reminder to all that the next conflict management and dynamic risk assessment course is being held at Cleveland Police Headquarters, Ladgate Lane, Middlesbrough, between 6.30pm and 9.30pm on Monday 15th February 2010. This is an essential element of training for all potential volunteers.

Stockton Town Pastors' first social evening took place on Saturday 30th January in the Baptist Tabernacle, with a good number of volunteers and their partners and families braving the cold weather to make this a great event. Many thanks go to Brian Jones and his small team of helpers for arranging the event and making sure it went well. It was also good to see Inspector Andy Fox and his partner Julie there (rumour has it he had heard about the and egg and spoon race and needed to redeem himself for finishing last in this event aged 11 years).

Our coordinator Steve Brock was taken aback by the 'this is your life' presentation. He is apparently biding his time before seeking retribution, but wonders if there is a subliminal message in being presented with the gift of a map of the UK?

Special thanks also go to Paul Blakey and his wife Jean, along with Street Angels Daniel and Vicky, who made the trip from Halifax to be with us for the evening. Thanks once again guys for all the encouragement and advice you continue to provide to all of the 40+ Street Angel schemes throughout the UK—your MBE in the New Years Honours List is a just reward for all the work you have done over the past four years.

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First Aid training for all volunteers continues, and there are now a total of thirty trained to the Emergency First Aid At Work (EFAW) standard. The courses have been extremely popular, with volunteers having a great time literally 'hands-on', under the watchful eye of trainer Barbara Broadbelt. Such has been the enthusiasm of all involved, it has inspired the decision to run a 'caption competition' surrounding our activities. To start this off, please consider which our instructor Barbara might be saying in this photo:



Answers please to Steve Brock via email: steve@stocktontownpastors.co.uk
By the end of February 2010—the winner will be announced in the next newsletter.

Boro Angels started their patrols in Middlesbrough town centre on 23rd January, and have been very well received by the public. They continue to suffer from a shortage of volunteers but this is slowly improving. Stockton Town Pastors continue to offer our prayer and support. If you would like to help them out on a Saturday evening between 10pm and 2am during February, please contact Steve Brock.



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The STP Steering Group are planning an 'Information Evening' on Tuesday 13th April 2010, to be held in Stockton Parish Church Hall. This will follow a review of our scheme, and we should by then be able to add some clarity to our involvement with other agencies and public services.

This is a meeting to which the public will have an open invitation, but we are also in the process of inviting local dignitaries and, of course, the media. Please put the date in your diary, as it would be good to have lots of volunteers present to talk to individuals and perhaps involve them in our scheme.

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Prayer Support

Please consider logging into our website as a registered user (go to the bottom left of the home page) for access to our 'Discussion Forum' which will allow you to read and add prayer requests. This is the most effective way of spreading prayer support across each of the thirteen local churches currently involved in the scheme, and keeps people in touch with up-to-date information. If you have difficulty registering please email Steve Brock for assistance.

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