

*Stockton Town Pastors**NEWSLETTER*Website: www.stocktontownpastors.co.uk**STOCKTON TOWN PASTORS 6-MONTH REVIEW IS PUBLISHED**

STP volunteers have now been patrolling the Stockton town centre area for more than 6 months, and what a wonderful experience it has been! We started patrolling each Friday evening between 9pm and 3am on 4th December 2010, and this was extended to include Saturdays from the beginning of March.

At the outset we decided to carry out a full review of our activities after six months, and this has now been concluded – the full document can be found on our website in the ‘downloads’ section.

So, what have we learned from this? Firstly, we have met our stated ‘aims’ of:

- i) Making a contribution to the safety and well-being of our fellow citizens,
- ii) Befriending the community, and
- iii) Helping those who find themselves marginalised and vulnerable.

Police data has revealed that, in the 25 weeks since we started patrols, there has been a 33% reduction in violent crime and a 34% reduction in arrests for drunk and disorderly offences on a Friday and Saturday evening, when compared with the previous 25-week period. It is important to recognise that this does not account for any ‘seasonal’ trends (i.e. Christmas), and the heavy snowfall in January combined with the continued economic downturn. However, such a significant reduction cannot be explained by these factors alone and it is therefore only reasonable to assume STP volunteers have made a significant and measurable contribution to the safety and well-being of those using Stockton on Friday and Saturday evenings.

Volunteers have also forged good relationships with police officers patrolling the streets, pub and club door-staff, taxi drivers and food outlet workers. There is no doubt that we are now accepted and appreciated by these people, and many others who find themselves in need of our assistance.

Volunteers have had 184 ‘significant encounters’ with individuals in the first six months, ranging from dispensing first aid (19%), to placing in a taxi / reconciling with others (13%) and providing other help (26%). We do encounter incidents of anti-social behaviour (15%), but have never ourselves been threatened with violence. We also come across a number of homeless people, and we work with these where possible to provide them with shelter and food.

Although we assist a large number of women who find themselves vulnerable, it has been quite surprising to learn that 58% of our contacts are with males – mainly in respect of needing first aid, are homeless, having been involved in disorder or who just want to talk in detail about what STP does, and why.

The largest proportion of people we assist (42%) are in the 18 – 24yrs age group, with the next highest (30%) being in the 25 – 34yrs age group.

Additionally, since we started patrolling we have picked up at least 179 discarded bottles or other glass objects (many smashed) from the streets. This is in addition to providing bottles of water to those in need and, of course, giving out our now-famous ‘flip-flops’ to girls who can no longer walk in their high heeled shoes.

So what about our volunteers? We now have 40 who are ‘active’ and make themselves available at least once a month to do patrols. They took part in survey as part of the review, which revealed that most were immensely satisfied with their involvement; with 92% indicating they were very likely to continue as a volunteer into the foreseeable future.

So, if you are thinking about joining us and are nervous about what you might come across then just have a chat with us and be reassured there is nothing to fear! The training provided and the support of others working in teams of three is enough to remove any doubts about your own safety.

Of course, there is still a lot to be done and the review has led to 18 recommendations being made – more details of which can be found in the document located on the website. However, these include securing a ‘High Street’ café from which patrols can operate, and which will provide a ‘drop-in’ and/or ‘signposting’ opportunity for those in need of advice or help during the daytime.

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VOLUNTEERS OPEN MEETING

There are many things to discuss as a result of the above review, and it is important that volunteers have their say. With this in mind the following arrangements have been made, in the hope that as many volunteers as possible will come along and meet with the coordinator and members of the STP Steering Group:

Friday 2nd July 2010, 7.30pm – 9pm
Stockton Parish Church Hall

It will be seen that this is immediately before we start our regular Friday evening patrols.

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NEW VOLUNTEERS

We currently have three new volunteers going through the application process, and hopefully they will be ready for patrols some time in July. They are

- Samantha Wood
- Ray Dang
- Linzi Hawkrige

Sam and Ray have been out with us in the past as observers, and Linzi has done street angel work in Wakefield before moving to Teesside to continue her studies.

If you know of anyone who is considering joining STP as a volunteer, please pass their details onto the coordinator so they can be included in the training programme.

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STP TRAINING

The coordinator is organising some further training in respect of the new volunteers, as follows:

Conflict Management & Dynamic Risk Assessment:

Thursday 15th July 2010, 7pm – 9.30pm at Cleveland Police Headquarters

Volunteer Handbook:

Thursday 1st July 2010, 7pm – 9pm at Stockton Baptist Tabernacle

If current volunteers would like to re-attend these two mandatory parts of the training programme then please contact the coordinator.

There will be a fresh round of first aid, licensing, vulnerable persons and CCTV training starting in September – further details to follow.

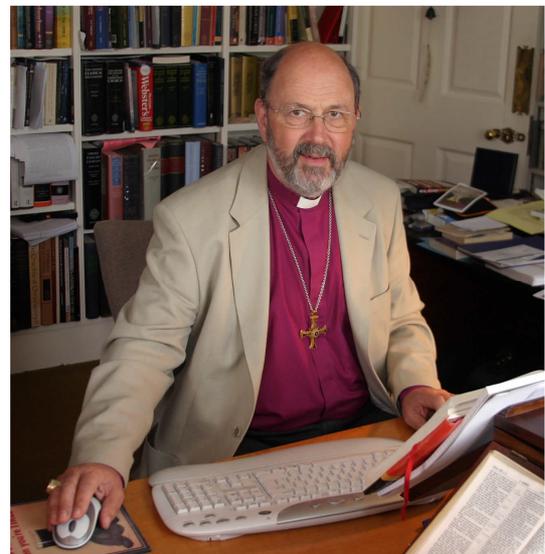
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BISHOP TOM COMES TO STOCKTON

The Bishop of Durham, Dr. Tom Wright, came out on patrol with Stockton Town Pastors on Good Friday – 2nd April. What an evening and what a privilege that was for everyone, especially those revellers whose normal experience of a night out involves only pints and pizzas!

This was part of a wider series of visits that the Bishop made to Stockton during holy week. He also officially marked the 700th Anniversary of the opening of Stockton Market by revealing a plaque and signing a scroll.

STP Volunteers patrolled the anniversary events, which took place on Wednesday and Saturday the 12th & 15th May.



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UPDATE ON HARTLEPOOL

There is currently a great deal of hope that a ‘Street Angels’ type project might be set up in Hartlepool, and certainly the Police and Safer Hartlepool Partnership are interested in exploring this possibility. The STP coordinator has offered his help in providing guidance if this goes ahead, and the churches in Hartlepool are considering their involvement. Please continue to pray that all will appreciate these projects are most successful where there is an equal and open partnership between Police, Council and the churches.

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CLEVELAND POLICE CO-ACT DAY

The Christian Police Association have developed a UK-wide programme aimed at reaching out and building bridges between Christian communities and the Police – more details can be found on the website www.coact.org.uk

A regional CPA meeting will be held at Tees Valley Community Church on Saturday 13th November 2010, starting at 10am and finishing at 3.30pm. The Stockton Town Pastors project will be covered during the event and several key individuals within the community will be there – including senior police officers and members of the four local Community Safety Partnerships. Please put this date in your diary – all are welcome – and there will be further details in the next newsletter.

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STP HAS ITS OWN FACEBOOK PAGE

Thanks to the efforts of volunteers Anna Johnson and Adam Newsham, STP now has its own ‘Facebook’ page – just go to www.facebook.com and type ‘Stockton Town Pastors’ into the search box. Feel free to add comments, or send photos to the administrator for uploading. STP volunteers are making this facility known to those ‘out on the town’ on a Friday and Saturday night and encouraging them to post their views on the site.

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STP SOCIAL EVENT

The last social event, in April, involved a ‘ten-pin’ bowling night (see right) followed by a Mexican meal. This was organised by Inspector Andy Fox and was a great success.



Of course, this means that there is pressure on the organiser to make sure the next one is equally enjoyable and poor Brian Jones is just that person! He is planning a picnic (probably in Preston Park one evening in late July – details to follow. If you would like to help with the arrangements please contact Brian on his mobile: 07742 932 957.

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Prayer Support

Please log into our website as a registered user (go to the bottom left of the home page) for access to our ‘Discussion Forum’ which allows you to read and add prayer requests. Currently there are not many items on the forum, but it is the most effective way of spreading prayer support across each of the local churches, 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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