



Taunton Street Pastors PRESS RELEASE

for immediate use

16 May 2008

Taunton's first Street Pastors start patrolling

Nearly 40 volunteers from 15 local churches will be commissioned as Street Pastors during a special Service at Wellsprings Leisure Centre in Taunton on Sunday 18 May.

Street Pastors are Christian volunteers trained to care for others, especially young people, who find themselves in need of help in the town centre late at night.

The first team of trained Street Pastors will begin patrols on the previous evening and hope to find a warm welcome from the night-time patrons and licensees. Team members are willing to engage people wherever they are, in terms of their thinking and perspective of life in whatever location, be it on the streets or in the pubs and clubs.

Over 50 towns and cities across the UK have introduced Street Pastor projects. Crime levels have reduced, often dramatically and in five years of operation, no Street Pastor has been injured.

Volunteers are over 18 (there is no upper age limit), active church members and willing to complete a challenging programme of training including sessions on youth culture, drugs and homelessness. A Criminal Records Bureau Check is required and references are obtained before joining a team of at least six people, each of whom will work a minimum of one night a month, usually on Saturdays from 10pm to around 4am. A distinctive uniform is worn when on patrol and radio communication is maintained with the town centre's CCTV control centre, Police and Licensed Premises' door staff.

Local Church Administrator, Mrs Kay Buriani, has been appointed Coordinator of the Taunton project.

The Taunton Street Pastors venture is grateful for the active support of Avon & Somerset Police, Taunton Deane Borough Council and Somerset Tackling Alcohol Related Crime Partnership.

Superintendent Chris Weigold, Head of Operations at Taunton will join the Mayor and Mayoress of Taunton Deane at the Commissioning event and spoke in anticipation of the launch, saying,

"We are committed to working with our partner agencies in making Taunton Town Centre safer at night and we welcome this community initiative by local churches.

"A friendly face for help and advice, at times when someone may well be vulnerable, will hopefully help to reduce incidents of crime and disorder, which can only be good for the town's night time economy."

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The scheme has been organised locally by former Mayor and Baptist Minister, Adrian Prior-Sankey, and the Revd Vincent Carrington of North Street Congregational Church.

Adrian Prior-Sankey has spoken of his own motivation for the initiative,

“Our community was horrified to learn of the tragic death of Lloyd Fouracre and the rape that occurred in Taunton's town centre shortly afterwards. As Christians we want to put our belief in God's love for all ages into practise and were encouraged by reports of Street Pastors' successes in reducing crime in many other towns and cities.

“So often the church is guilty of commentating but not getting up out of the pews to be part of the solution to society's problems. From this weekend onwards we will hope to make a difference for the benefit of all who use our town centre late at night. “

The Revd Vince Carrington highlighted the desire of participants to react appropriately to what they find on the streets,

“Street Pastor schemes are one way in which today's Christians seek to earn credibility in the community, so that people know that the Church is there for them in a practical way. The role is not about preaching heaven and hell, but one of listening, caring and helping - working in an unconditional way.”

Everyone is welcome to attend the gathering of many local churches representing many denominations and none at Wellsprings Centre at 11.00 am. The guest speaker will be Dr Steve Brady of Moorlands Bible College in Dorset.

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Notes to Editors

Further information is available from:

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