



A PRACTICAL EXPRESSION OF **GOD'S LOVE** TO ALL PEOPLE

Newsletter April 2022

Love Your Neighbour



A Volunteer's Story

From childhood, one of the Bible stories that stuck in my brain was the parable of the Good Samaritan. In it Jesus explains to a cynical, perhaps narrow-minded audience who their neighbour is. And the message loud and clear is that it is the person you would be least likely to consider. I always thought "How lovely"..... but did I do it? No.

I vaguely knew about Street Angels - my wonderful cousin Helen was a street pastor in Lincoln and I had her on a pedestal. What an amazing thing for someone else to do! Not me! Then about 3 years ago a Bedford Street Angel was standing at the front of my church, talking about Bedford, where my teenagers were going out. Martin Denny told us that Fran and Fred Gill, who were instrumental in launching Bedford Street Angels, had lost their own son when he was on a night out in Bedford. A victim of drunken aggression. A life snatched without provocation. His parents felt called by Jesus to make Bedford a safer place.



Martin could have been talking just to me. I felt hot, bothered and my heart was racing.

Love your neighbour..... Jesus was telling me loud and clear - you can do this! Do it for me and in my name. I spoke to Martin afterwards and signed up for an observer shift - that didn't commit me, after all. But that first night, I got stuck right in! I had found a way of serving God that was incredibly meaningful to me, a way of sharing that practical love that Jesus talked about with complete strangers and sometimes being invited to explain why I would give up a night in a warm bed to patrol the streets of Bedford.

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We are routinely faced with scared girls separated from friends, not sure how to get home; with clubbers who need help to sober up and catch a cab; with people who have had their drinks spiked and are disorientated and very scared; with youngsters thrown out of a club. Folk who just need a listening ear. Folk who need our portable chargers so they can phone for help. We are met with hugs and high fives from folk who have been helped in the past. They know we are Christians. We have the chance to witness, sowing seeds. God's love in action, not only meaningful to us but to them too!



We sweep up broken glass and pick up abandoned bottles - potential weapons at worst and a risk to barefooted ladies who have abandoned killer heels. We dish out free flip-flops and those who know we have them seek us out and ask! They are always so grateful. I have been vomited on, sworn at, cried on and hugged. I have been thanked, not just by the folk in trouble but by worried parents whom we have had to contact to rescue their adult children. I have experienced kindness from a Bedford cab driver who drove me and a vulnerable young lady to her home, then dropped me into town without charge. We work with and witness to door staff, police and ambulance crews just by our presence, without saying a word. We get a hot drink for free in Cashino's in quiet moments - we chat to the staff and sometimes to the people gambling their money in the hope of a bit of luck. More "God" conversations.....

So there you are. Do I look forward to staying up all night? No. Am I grumpy the next day for lack of sleep? Yes! Would I stop doing it? Absolutely not! I was called - and for a change I obeyed! And it is all in Jesus' name. I am no Good Samaritan but I am so, so honoured to be a part of Bedford Street Angels and serve God in this way.

Claire Broughton-Welsh

Come and meet us at:

- North Bedford Churches Together Lent course, Wed 6th April 7.30 p.m. at Holy Cross and Thursday 7th April 11.30 a.m. at Putnoe Heights
- Elstow Abbey May Festival, Saturday 7th May 12.00 – 4.00 p.m.

Find out more or get in touch:

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find us on 