

GOOD NEWS

FOR NORWICH & NORFOLK

Harvest 2015: FREE

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Food and fun as over 680 meals served in city

■ Over 680 meals have been served in FISH holiday clubs across Norwich, supported by Norwich Foodbank, with both food and fun on the menu.

School holidays can be a time of pressure on the family budget. Government provision of free school meals helps during term time, but hundreds of local families struggle to make ends meet in the holidays. Hunger is a reality for some families, which is where Food and Fun In School Holidays (FISH) clubs step in.

Hannah Worsley, Project Manager at Norwich Foodbank, has been delighted with the response of the community in getting behind FISH. Volunteers from churches, donations from the public, local businesses and food given from gar-

deners' allotments have meant that a hot, nutritious meal as been served at all seven clubs.

Hannah said, "This year the support has been good, if not even better than last year."

It's not just about food - low-cost entertainment is a challenge for parents during the holidays. The clubs strive to provide excellent activities that the children wouldn't be able to do at home.

Hannah said: "We were keen to offer some really engaging, exciting activities. "I didn't want it to be just art and craft or something they could do at home, I wanted it to be brilliant."

The activities on offer haven't disappointed and have included Bollywood dance by Jayadance, CSI investigations by Right Angle Events and fos-

sil hunting with The Little Story Telling Company. Parents report children return home buzzing.

Hannah said, "We've served more parent meals this year. More food is cooked than needed so parents can enjoy a meal if they want to stay. If the children are going hungry then the parents definitely will be. It's nice to be able to offer parents cup of coffee, a piece of cake and a break while the children are occupied."

Although a Norwich Foodbank project, it is very much up to the church and community to deliver the clubs. Andy Eyre, Youth and Children's Pastor at Norwich Central Baptist Church, led the club at George White Middle School. He said, "The club is a real practical demonstration of God's love."



Awards aim to find best Norfolk Christian digital communications

■ The first-ever Norfolk Christian Digital Communications Awards, staged by Network Norfolk & Norfolk, will be held at Norwich Central Baptist Church on Wednesday November 11, and entries and nominations are now being invited.

Presenting the awards will be the Bishop of Norwich, the Rt Rev Graham James, who is also the Church of England lead spokesman on media issues.

Network Norfolk publisher, Keith Morris, said: "We are staging the awards to help recognize, reward and encourage good Christian digital communications across Norfolk. The event will also help us celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Network Norfolk & Norfolk website."

There are six award categories, which aim to recognize and reward innovative Christian communications across all digital forms and channels:

- Best blog - sponsored by Good News for Norwich
- Best use of social media - sponsored by the Christian Conference Trust
- Most innovative use of digital media (ie video, enews, podcasts) - sponsored by YMCA Norfolk
- Best Christian organization website - sponsored by ChurchInsight
- Best small church website - sponsored by ChurchInsight
- Best large church website - sponsored by ChurchInsight

Entrants must be Norfolk-based and define themselves as part of the Christian community and the evening itself is being sponsored by the Diocese of Norwich.

Entry is by self or public online nomination via the www.networknorfolk.co.uk website and is open until September 30.

Judges will draw up a shortlist of finalists at the start of October, all of whom will be invited to the Awards evening.

An online public vote on the finalists will take place in October and will be used, with the judges' votes, to determine the winners.

Winners will be named at the Awards evening on Wednesday November 11, which will begin with a drink and canapé reception in the atrium at Norwich Central Baptist Church, with live music and an exhibition from all awards sponsors.

The awards themselves will take place in the main sanctuary and will be presented by the Bishop of Norwich, along with category sponsors.

"This is an excellent initiative and I am delighted to be there for the awards ceremony," said Bishop Graham.

Vision to capture a million churches

A Norwich photographer has launched an ambitious project to post pictures of one million churches online - and he needs your help. Kevin Gotts reports.

Tom Oliver, a photographer working in Norwich, is founder of Create Vision, a group of photographers who have a passion for Jesus and to inspire worship through what they see, capture and create.

He wanted to introduce a long-running project and photographing 'the Church' was an idea that just came to him. He said: "I believe that it was definitely God's idea to aim for one million photos of them, but God does things in a bigger way, so I am totally reliant on His help to reach 1,000,000 photos!"

Tom explained: "This new project is focussed on capturing images of as many churches worldwide as possible and sharing them on social media with the hashtag #onemillionchurches. There are approximately 50,000 churches in the UK, so the figure of 1,000,000 images will need some form of global help (and heavenly help) to reach our target."

When the project launched, it was just him, but now there are regular image submissions from people in Albania, Florida, UK, South America and beyond: "It's quite exciting to see how people from all sorts of backgrounds and cultures perceive the Church, and this is the whole point of the project," said Tom.

"There are currently 37 million churches in the world. Some are grand buildings and some are understated shacks. However, as a whole, they represent the same thing!"

■ story continues on page 4



GOOD NEWS

FOR NORWICH & NORFOLK

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 This will not only encourage those Christians involved in similar activities but also inform leaders in other churches who are contemplating similar forms of outreach.

■ The deadline for material for the Christmas edition is Friday November 6. Distribution is from Thursday November 26.

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Harvest should be a time of thanksgiving

■ I go into the fruit and veg section of the supermarket and stand in front of shelves stacked high with apples and feel disappointed because my favourite type of apple is not there.

I move on a few aisles and look at the long rows of jams and feel let down because the particular make I like is not there. Moving on I am drawn to the tempting smell of freshly baked bread but despite standing there for several minutes end up putting nothing in my trolley as the particular kind of bread roll I was hoping for has sold out. As I pack up my purchases at the checkout, I wonder whether I might do better to try a different supermarket next time.

Later that day I sit watching the television news with a report from yet another refugee camp. The camera focuses on some children scrabbling in the dirt for the last few grains of rice on the floor of the distribution centre.

And I feel ashamed. How dare I be so fussy? In any supermarket, I walk past more food than most people in the world can even dream of. What does it really matter if I cannot have the particular apples, jam or bread I like - to have any choice at all makes me a very fortunate human being.

To wander into any supermarket should be an occasion for great thanksgiving for all the food that is available to us. However we have become so used to living in a time of plenty that instead of learning gratitude we have become



Andrew Bryant, Canon for Mission and Pastoral Care, Norwich Cathedral

fussy, picky, choosy, coming to believe that this plenty is ours by right.

And this is precisely why we need the celebration of Harvest more than ever. We need a moment amidst all this plenty to stop, pause and think. Most importantly we need to stop to remember how very fortunate we are to live amidst such plenty and give thanks for this blessing. And alongside that to give thanks for all those who help grow, transport, manufacture and distribute the food we enjoy. Every time we eat we are being linked to a myriad of different people who have played a part in bringing the food to our plate.

But Harvest thanksgiving is also a time to pause and listen to the farmers around us and to hear their stories and, sadly, often their

struggles. And we also need to pause and consider how providing inexpensive food all the year around can impact on the economies of other parts of the world, distort their food supply and can impact on the environment.

It is time too to become mindful of the needs of others, reflecting on why the need for food banks in this country is growing. And it is time to consider how we can live amidst so much plenty while so many have so little and children have to scabble in the dirt for a few grains of rice.

Harvest should be a real celebration and a time of profound and deep thanksgiving, acknowledging the riches of creation and the wonder of the Creator. It should not be about making us feel guilty in the face of the needs of others but true thanksgiving is about ensuring that we do not take the blessings of our lives for granted and it is about wanting to share the blessings we enjoy with others who may not be so blessed. Remember with blessings come responsibilities.

So this autumn, take yourself off to the local Harvest festival; join in the celebrations, say a loud "Amen" to the Harvest prayers and if you are lucky enough to meet one of our wonderful local farmers, shake them by the hand and say "thank you".

And next time, and each time, you wander into your local supermarket look around you and say a little prayer of thanksgiving.

Prayer births new church expression

The monthly Sunday services at the pensioners' complex at Hanover Gardens are attracting an eager congregation who are reconnecting with their faith. 'Church at Hanover' - an offshoot of Mulbarton Church - is like family for some older people who find love, friendship and hospitality as they hear and respond to the gospel.

Informal mid-week monthly services at Hanover Gardens, on Birchfield Lane, began many years ago but the dwindling numbers would see a divine turnaround. The breakthrough began after a midweek meeting with a handful of attendees.

Nina Davey from the church explains: "Immediately after a couple of ladies had finished praying for new people to join the group a lady came saying she would love to attend however she was not used to going to church and was anxious. She came to the next service, then her husband came and then friends too."

As God moved, the sessions began to flourish. They would pave the way for a new church on the southern side of the village in line with Jill and Mary's prayers and the

The faithful prayers of two women helped birth a fresh expression of church in **Mulbarton** over three years ago. **Jill Wright** and **Mary Ratcliff** prayed for another church at the opposite end of the village to the parish church and it began four years after Mary's death. **Sandie Shirley** reports.

prayers of a few others who joined them. Mary continued praying until she lost her fight with cancer in 2008.

Permission was sought from the PCC for a Sunday service and, following their consent, eight church members prayed through the planning and preparation, seeking God's purposes.

The traditional services at Church at

Hanover started in January 2012 in the complex lounge and appeal to older people. The church began as it meant to continue with traditional hymns, prayers read by congregation members and the Gospel message given by clergy and lay readers.

The church has been forged with loving actions, prayer and God's provision. "Because everyone who lives on the complex is invited as well as others who live near, there is no charge to hire the room. Everyone gives generously so the main church is helped financially as well as some charities, including Norwich Foodbank. We were able to buy 50 copies of large print hymn books which the congregation paid for too. Everyone gets a warm welcome, nice refreshments and a good goodbye," says Nina.

She adds: "God started this church and, by the prayers of many people, it will be a blessing to all whom he brings, for as long as he wants it to carry on."

Church at Hanover is held on the fourth Sunday of each month at 10.30am. Contact the church office at the Rectory - 01508 571167.



A church service at Hanover Gardens.



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New pastors as tlc Norwich joins Elim

Independent church **tlcNorwich** officially joined the **Elim** network of churches on September 4 and inducted its new senior pastors, **Rev Dominic and Catherine De Souza**. **Keith Morris** reports.

A congregation of around 150 saw Dominic, and his wife Catherine, formally inducted as the new senior pastor of tlcNorwich which, at the same time, joined the 100-year-old Elim Pentecostal Church network of 70,000 people in 600 churches.

The service heard from Elim General Superintendent John Glass, who urged the church to be a catalyst in its community: "I believe this day is a breakthrough moment for this church, building on the work of past years," he said.

Performing the induction, Elim Metropolitan East Regional Leader, David Campbell, said: "We want to see this church take its place with the other churches in this area and we ask for a blessing on every church that honours the name of Jesus that we might see every church grow."

After the induction, Catherine said: "We are really excited that we are here and are in a 'this is it' moment."

Dominic said: "The 2011 census said that Norwich is the most atheistic city in the country, but we are going to prove them wrong because God is up to something here. We want to see a people who are so filled with the Holy Spirit and the love of God that it literally spills out of us into every stream and sector of society, into business, the media, education and leisure and that we affect an atmospheric change."

"We are excited about the future and the new site we have on Cromer Road and about building a city church that can impact society. We also want to stand shoulder-to-shoulder together with other churches and see something quite wonderful happen here."

"We see tlcNorwich as a church that preaches the pure unadulterated Word of God and that loves people. We want it to be a church which moves out in the power of God and sees signs, wonders and miracles – being a naturally supernatural people."

Prior to moving to Norwich, Dominic was the Senior Leader of Letchworth Garden City Church – a growing and thriving Elim church in Hertfordshire. Before that he was an Assistant Pastor at Kensington Temple, Elim's largest church, where he also served as Director of Training.

Dominic started preaching at the age of 11 and entered into church leadership at the age of 13. He went on to become an award-winning student at Cambridge University, where he read theology. Dominic also serves on the Advisory Council for the Cinnamon Network and as Parliamentary Representative for Elim, as well as being a member of the Elim Metropolitan regional team.

Dominic says that he sees his principle role as equipping the church for effective ministry in the marketplace, through both strategic leadership and Spirit-empowered preaching of



the Word that enables people to integrate faith with daily life.

Catherine is Head of Programmes for Langley House Trust, a national charity which works to transform the lives of male and female offenders and those who are at risk of offending.

Previously Catherine was a departmental head at Holy Trinity Brompton, overseeing Alpha International's ministries in prisons, Caring for Ex-Offenders and in equipping churches to seek justice in and for their communities.

Catherine says she is passionate about the transformational role the church has in demonstrating God's justice throughout society, so that the poor and marginalised have hope. Catherine serves on the board of youth charity Emerge and offender employability charity Clean Sheet. The couple have one son, Kobie.

Dominic previously said: "This move is a massive step of faith for us but we have a firm sense that this is what God is asking us to do – and so we must obey. It is also a strategic decision to go to Norwich – thinking nationally and long-term, we believe that there is room for the kind of church that God has envisioned us for in that part of the country."

Pictured above are Dominic and Catherine De Souza at the induction service at tlcNorwich. Picture by Thom Law.



Trio take on cycle challenge for YMCA

■ Three YMCA Norfolk colleagues are set to take on the challenge of a 360-mile Tour de Y bike ride from the Lake District to central London in late September to raise vital cash for the youth charity.

Joe Fisher, Kevin Dynes and Joseph Bickerdike all work for the YMCA in Norwich and will be riding the 360 miles from a YMCA on the shore of Lake Windermere in the Lake District to a YMCA in central London from September 23 to 26, completing around 90 miles a day.

Kevin Dynes, a key worker at YMCA Central in Norwich, helps young people get ready for an independent life. He said: "I always use Cycles UK on London Street in Norwich to help maintain my mountain bike as they have a great professional team and now they're going to lend me a road bike for the Tour de Y, how nice is that."

"I love working for YMCA Norfolk and I love riding bikes and I do not think enough people know about the work that YMCA Norfolk does, so this should help raise awareness of it."

Joseph Bickerdike is also a key worker at YMCA Central. He said: "I work with young people affected by homelessness and I know first hand the amazing impact that this fundraising could have. I'd also love to help break down stereotypes that we so often have of young people, homelessness and those on benefits."

Joseph, who attends Oak Grove Community Chapel in Norwich, said: "I ride my bike around town and to work etc but have never done any long rides, so 360 miles will be a bit different and quite a challenge. I am doing it with a couple of my friends, so it should be a bit of an adventure."

Joe Fisher, who is a Nightstop and Supported Lodgings support worker and a regular cyclist with the Wensum Valley Cyclists, said: "I am doing the ride to raise awareness and promote the work that YMCA Norfolk does across the county."

You can support them at:

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Vision to capture a million churches

■ **story continues from front page**

There are more than 11,000,000 images currently on Instagram with the hashtag 'church'. This figure shows that people already look at church buildings with some form of architectural intrigue. I aim to utilise this and encourage people globally to photograph churches. The term 'church' will mean different things to different people and the images captured of a church will have different meanings to everyone," he said.

Tom currently works full-time as a senior photographer, capturing lifestyle and high-end cosmetic photographs for a range of well-known brands and retailers. Alongside his work, he is busy being a husband, a father and a coffee lover. Tom and his wife, Jem, moved to Beccles two years ago to gain a little bit more peace and calm from the hustle and bustle of life in Norwich city centre. They now have a son Jonah (10 months) and are expecting a second child in January 2016. They are members of Lowestoft Community Church.

At the time of writing, around 400 images have been uploaded to the project from all around the world, with approximately 50 from Norfolk, with images being added nearly every day.

Tom concluded; "#onemillionchurches will spark the creative attention of people who are Christians and non-Christians, photographers and non-photographers all coming together to join in capturing 'the church'. Many people will photograph buildings, some will capture their church families and others may capture something different, however all of these images will be capturing something of God's love for us."

■ **Get involved and submit an image:**

1. Set up an Instagram account or open an Instagram app on your mobile device.

2. Post your photo with the hashtag: #onemillionchurches - please also share the name and location of the church which helps establish where in the world you are getting involved with the project. It doesn't matter if the church has already been photographed, because the way they photographed it will be different to the way you have.

3. If you are unable to set up an account, send the image to hello@createvision.co.uk and they will post it for you.

You can find all the current pictures at: <https://instagram.com/explore/tags/one-millionchurches/>

Journey from a rock star to Norwich pastor

Norwich youth pastor **Andy Eyre's** dramatic journey to faith brought him through turbulent teenage years on Guernsey and a hedonistic lifestyle in a successful rock band to a transformed life in full-time church ministry. **Helen Baldry** reports.

Born in Croydon, South London to Baptist pastor parents, Andy moved around a lot as a young child. His family settled on the tiny Channel island of Guernsey when he was eight years old. He lived there for the next 11 years and spent his formative years on the island where his parents led the church.

Andy found there was not much to occupy young people and he got caught up in the heavy drinking culture on the island. He said, "I started drinking at the age of about 11 or 12, even though I was still going to church and involved in the worship. It really was one foot in the world and one foot in the church."

From the age of 15, Andy's drinking had escalated and he had started smoking and taking drugs.

Despite this, he experienced incredible success, firstly in a financial career back on the mainland, and secondly, in his early 20s playing regular gigs and festivals in a punk rock band.

Andy said, "My whole life started to go very far away from church. I cut my dad off a lot. I didn't really like him at all because



Norwich youth pastor, Andy Eyre.

he was pastor of a church. It's a strong word but it was borderline hatred - but that's where I was at."

Andy spoke about his sex, drugs and rock n roll lifestyle. In a day he would consume a litre of vodka, followed by 15 or 20 pints and a lot of drugs. He said, "I thought I was fine, but I was a mess."

Andy describes the point at which things began to change

felt. I said I want the door - even though I was pursuing that success and fame and everything that came with it. It didn't feel right. I chose the door but I carried on my life as before - I was drinking lots, smoking, drugs... all of that stuff."

Shortly after, Andy went to Reading Festival where one night he had a spiritual encounter which changed the direction of his life.

He believes there was a wrestle for his soul that night. "I was lying there and I knew I was dying. I felt incredibly empty. I had nothing to show for all the success I had had."

"I had friends, I had gigs, I had the band. I got offered a couple of record deals... all the success the world could chuck at you but actually it was meaningless. I had nothing."

Andy decided to go to church just once to see if God was real. Stepping into an Elim Pentecostal church in London, he had his doubts, yet suddenly he felt the most incredible sense of God's presence and love. "I felt addictions being taken away from me. It was like somebody was cutting the addictions from inside."

Following his dramatic transformation, Andy discovered a passion for people, particularly teenagers and he returned to Guernsey to work as a youth pastor.

"My motivation is that I love people. My heart's desire is that we all connect with God in an authentic way."

Andy got back in touch with a family friend, Ellie, who had heard of his testimony and they are now married and have three children.

They moved to Norwich in April this year and Andy started work as Youth and Children's Pastor at Norwich Central Baptist Church.

when he had an experience while he was living in Camden. "There was a moment when I woke up and I just felt something evil. I couldn't describe it. This thing told me I was going to be in a band and have money and success but I had to follow it - or I could choose a wooden door. It was just a wooden door. There was nothing special about it."

"It felt wrong. I didn't like how I

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Members of the Norwich Chinese church with Pastor Edmond Tsui (third left).

Rainstorm prayer led to a transformed life

Edmond Tsui (pronounced "Shwee") became a director of a successful financial company before turning his attention to helping set up a network of 12 Chinese churches, plus fellowship groups, across the UK.

Over more than 20 years, Norwich-based Pastor Edmond has clocked up over 500,000 miles pursuing a vision to encourage lonely overseas Chinese people to find a 'church home' where language and culture are not hindrances to growth. In East Anglia, there are several thousand Chinese, many of them students.

In Norwich, Pastor Edmond leads the vibrant Chinese congregation at Bowthorpe Road Methodist Church where services for all ages are held in Cantonese and Mandarin plus monthly Sunday meetings in English.

Born in Hong Kong, Edmond's story is an unusual journey to faith because he finished his education, stubbornly resisting the Christian message at a secondary school where many students and staff were believers.

In 1973, just before graduation, he was camping in the New Territories of Hong Kong with friends when they were flooded out in a

A desperate prayer in a torrential thunderstorm was a life-transforming moment for the son of a Hong Kong taxi driver who is now leader of a Chinese church in Norwich. **Mike Wiltshire reports.**

torrential thunderstorm. Amidst their disappointment, Edmond heard himself pray: "God, I don't believe in you, but if you're real, you can stop this thunderstorm."

Within 15 minutes, the rain stopped. Edmond was so impressed by this personal "miracle" that he told his astonished student friends: "I'm trusting my life to Jesus Christ!"

Today, Edmond admits that, theologically, that is a weak argument for faith, but he says: "it reveals God's mercy long ago to a young, proud heart."

He went to church on the Sunday after the storm - and has gone on believing for 42 years, pioneering in church-planting projects in many places, often working with Rev David Foo, a well-known Chinese Malaysian minister.

Edmond was born into a non-Christian home, but recalls with joy the fact that both his parents became believers in Christ.

In response to what was "a clear call from God," Edmond and his wife, Amy, sold their home in the Hong Kong and moved to the UK with their three sons in 1994. Edmond helped set up a Chinese church in Epsom - and, from there, a network of 12 churches has spread across the UK.

In all his many ministry trips, Edmond "wore out six cars - and now I'm on my seventh." The Norwich area became base for the fifth church in the chain, 17 years ago. Members met for many years at Wroxham Road Methodist Church, but with expansion they moved to Bowthorpe Road Church a year ago.

It is the only Chinese church in Norfolk and Edmond's vision is to see it grow as a community church for everyone, not just Chinese-speaking members, networking with other churches. As a pastor, Edmond says he is "moved to tears to see lives transformed by the message of Jesus" - and seeing people set free from serious issues.

For details of services: contact Pastor Edmond on 07957 573 098 or Ms Kit Holland on 07880 745 065.



Christian football league looks for sponsors

■ A range of exciting opportunities to sponsor the Norfolk Christian Football League have been made available for the new season, kicking off in September 2015.

The long-established Christian league, which comprises five leagues at different age levels including over 40 teams, is looking for sponsors for its different leagues and cup competitions and also for its widely-read website and regular news bulletin.

League chairman, Mike Culwick, said: "Our leagues comprise literally hundreds of players taking part in games across Norfolk every Saturday during the season, all under the banner of Linking Church to Community through Football."

"This season we want to open up the opportunity for local business or organisations to join with us in our mission, while reaching hundreds of potential customers both out on the pitches and via our website, whose pages are read thousands of times every month, and via our regular news bulletin which goes to around 550 people every month."

"If you would like to get involved in a partnership which can help both the league and your business or organisation, then I would love to hear from you," said Mike.

Sponsorship opportunities exist with banner adverts on the website and in the bulletin and also adverts in a special programme covering all of the league cup finals and five-a-side competitions. It is also possible to sponsor each of the five leagues from Under 10 to adult level or the entire league.

For more details contact Mike Culwick at mcculwick@gmail.com



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Val Dodsworth, MBE.

Christian pioneer Val honoured by Queen

Norfolk Christian social action pioneer, **Val Dodsworth**, who was instrumental in launching a string of initiatives including Norfolk Street Pastors, House of Genesis and Community Chaplaincy Norfolk, has been recognised in the Queen's Birthday Honours list, by being made an MBE. **Keith Morris** reports.

■ Inspired by her Christian faith, former probation officer Val Dodsworth, aged 78, started the House of Genesis project from her own home in Sprowston in 2000 taking in ex-prisoners who would otherwise be homeless. Fifteen years on, the project has two homes in Thorpe St Andrew and on Dereham Road in Norwich, accommodating up to ten men.

The House of Genesis is run as a home for single homeless men. The accommodation is usually needed for between 9 and 15 months and is a stop-gap while the men find their feet again. Some of the residents are ex-offenders looking for a fresh start. Some are homeless, often due to a breakdown in a relationship.

Community Chaplaincy Norfolk is a recently launched service for men in Norfolk prisons - either Norwich or Wayland - and works in conjunction with The House of Genesis. The Community Chaplaincy project has arisen because of the need to support people as they leave prison, whether or not they need accommodation - and also to reach many others who need mentoring as they adjust to life back in the community.

Val, who lost her husband Bill in 1992, was also instrumental in the launch of Norfolk Street Pastors (now

Norfolk Street Partnership) back in 2006. At the very first meeting at Norwich City Hall in the autumn of 2006, Val clearly felt God's call to volunteer as its first co-ordinator and with here experience was the driving force behind the launch in Norfolk.

She set to work to contact churches, the local authority, police and other ministries in Norwich and in an extraordinarily short time she had found 18 people to sign up to the first training course in January 2007 and the project grew from there.

Val has been made an MBE for services to homeless people and to the community in Norwich.

She said: "When I received the letter from the Government Office I thought it must be about taxes or the Police. When I sat down and opened it and it said the Prime Minister has recommended to the Queen that you receive an honour, I just sat down and burst into tears. I thought what a carry-on. I was amazed that someone like me could receive a medal, an honour. I just wish that my dear mother could have been here to see it as she would have been over the moon."

"From the beginning, the House of Genesis has been a work of God, though the ups and downs and when I thought it was going to die back in 2008. God has resurrected it and now with two houses it is absolutely flourishing."

John Betts, who helped Val set up Norfolk Street Partnership, said: "Val is a stalwart of the Norfolk Christian community. When we set up Norfolk Street Partnership she was the key person who caught the vision and ran with it."

"Her tireless work brought the organization into existence and set the ministry in motion. The people of Norwich owe Val, under God, a sincere debt of gratitude. I am delighted that Val's wonderful work has been recognized in this way."

Norwich leaders hear

Transformation expert **Dr Alistair Petrie** talked to Norfolk church leaders about the keys to unlocking cultural and spiritual change across an area and the barriers and challenges to it, at a meeting in Norwich on May 20. **Keith Morris** reports.

Alistair was in Norwich for a week at the start of a three-year project, initiated by Transforming Norwich, to enable the local church to address the issue of societal transformation, one which he has already helped begin in 800 cities right across the world.

Speaking to around 50 church leaders at Soul Church in Norwich, Alistair said: "Norwich has caught the attention of many people around the world and is being prayed for by them."

"We have come to see what God is doing, to learn from you and with you and to share with you some of those areas where God is currently working around the world. Also, what God is saying to the church in a global arena and how that might be affecting the church in Norwich and Norfolk."

We see people being transformed, but can we see whole areas or cities be transformed before God, asked Alistair.

"In a global context we have seen that if people and leaders pray in a particular way, we can actually see a societal shift taking place," he said. "We begin to see a framework in

which an authentic transformational revival shifts the way in which businesses, politics, ethics, morals and academia also begin to change their attitude towards the Lord. God would begin to brood over cities in a way we had never seen before as we began to undertake certain principles God was teaching us about."

The transformation process started with eight cities around the world from Kenya to Guatemala, Columbia to California which featured in the first transformation DVD in 1999.

"You cannot expect to see your city changed beyond where you as leaders and pastors are prepared to go yourselves," Alistair told his audience.

He went on to outline some of the elements involved in beginning spiritual transformation. They include: spiritual mapping or epidemiology; pastoring a city; city transformation; healing the land; reading the signs of the times; having a healthy world view; mandatory spiritual warfare; deception and obstacles for leaders.

He also outlined challenges in preparing people and cities for God's presence. They

include understanding; the perspective of the cross; issues of the heart; our identity; the issue of protocol; the power of repentance; holy ground; obedience to the Word; the power of intimacy; and God speaking to His church.

The requirements for releasing God's power on the land include: unity; foundations within the church; identifying the gaps; renewing your mind; restoring the altar of worship; identifying and binding the strong man; and a strategy to move forward.

"Walking as one releases the beauty and dynamic and distinctiveness and destiny of our different shapes and sizes and giftings - together we can get the task accomplished," said Alistair.

"We need all of our denominations to complete and not compete."

"Revival comes when we break down the walls of the churches and re-engage with our culture."

"You need a critical mass of the church to be desperate for a move of God and be prepared to pay the price," said Alistair.

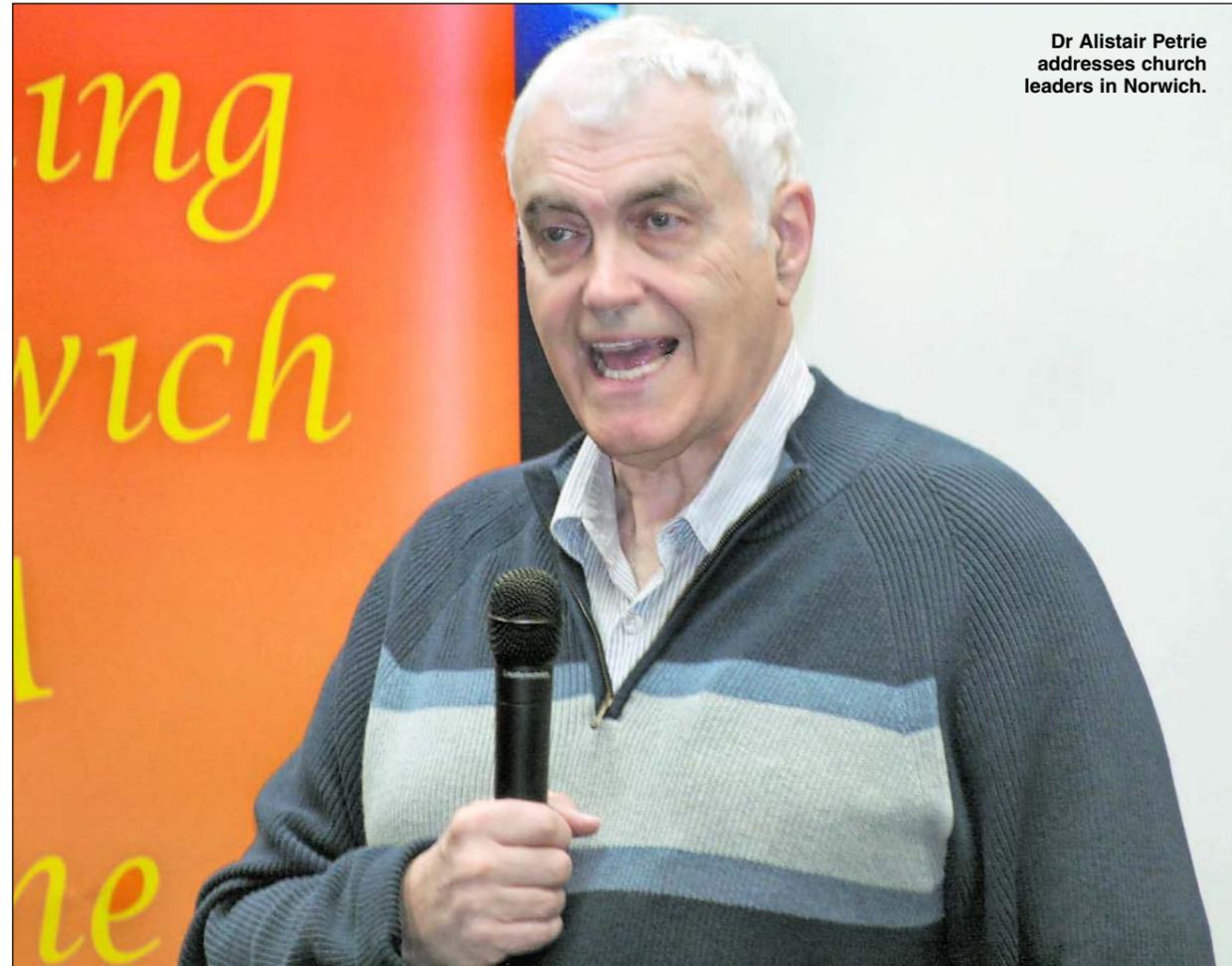
■ You can hear Dr Petrie's entire message on the website www.networknorfolk.co.uk

Derek get the best birthday



Derek White, who received a new heart on his birthday after a three-year wait, with wife Sue.

r of transformation



Dr Alistair Petrie addresses church leaders in Norwich.

gift ever - a new heart

On the critical list after waiting more than three years for a heart transplant, **Norwich** resident **Derek White** prayed for, and received, the best birthday gift ever. **Mike Wiltshire** reports.

■ For most of the three years, Derek only stayed alive because he was fitted with an internal pump operated by an exterior computerised battery pack - weighing several pounds. He carried the pack with a shoulder strap or from a waistbelt.

Derek's situation became more desperate as he was put on the critical list for many weeks. However, Derek, with his wife, Sue, are both convinced Christians and they never lost hope - they asked God if Derek "could have a new heart for his birthday". And ten minutes before his birthday was over, doctors at Papworth Hospital told him he would receive his new heart.

The long wait was over. But surgeons who carried out the complex operation admitted "it was very tricky" because Derek's health was more precarious than anticipated. Derek - who once worked in the car and computer industries - has since pulled through and is getting stronger day by day.

Derek and Sue, both 66, each lost their previous partners through sickness. Sue has also survived all manner of challenges in life: a gas explosion at home gave her terrible burns at the age of 44, but many scars have faded. Sue has also survived breast cancer.

The couple, who have four grown-up

children, both attend Soul Church in Norwich and support the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship. Sue, with her first husband, were pastors of an Elim Church in Sheffield, and Sue is an experienced Bible teacher.

"Derek's recovery has been a miracle," says Sue, who admits "life can be tough." She likes to recall her favourite Bible promise that says: "We know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose for them." (Romans 8:28).

In Papworth Hospital, Derek and Sue had 'wonderful conversations' with other heart patients and their families. They remember a young man - a heart patient - who became a Christian in hospital, but later passed away. Despite the tragic loss, they sensed that the young man had experienced "the heartfelt peace that only Christ can give."

Sue, who knows her Bible, says we all really need "a new heart" in order to experience life at its best. Sue recalls God's ancient promise to his people: "I will give them hearts that will recognise me as Lord. They will be my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me wholeheartedly," (Jeremiah 7:24).

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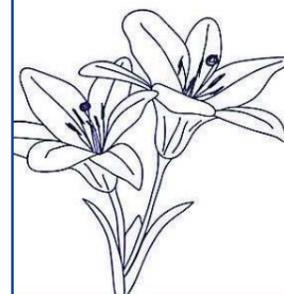
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Funeral Services
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Norfolk events

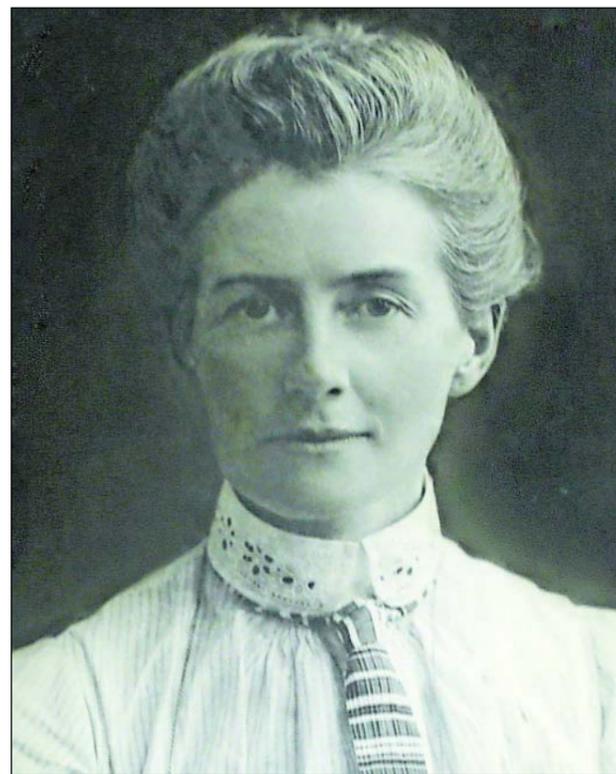
- From October 5-17: at The Forum: exhibitions, lectures, drama and more including the railway van which brought Edith's remains from Dover to Victoria.
- The Cavell Centenary Festival in Swardeston (her birthplace), October 3-4
- Exhibitions in Norwich - in the Forum, the Castle Museum, the Norfolk Record Office, the Cathedral, the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital, St Mary's Swardeston
- Remember Edith Cavell - the telling of Edith Cavell's story in words and music in Norwich Cathedral, October 10 by Searchlight Theatre Company, the Cathedral consort and the Cavell orchestra. (Performances at 3pm and 7.30pm - tickets from Prelude Records (www.preluderecords.co.uk or 01603 628319)
- Main commemorative service at Norwich Cathedral on October 12, 6pm
- UEA School of Nursing Science lecture series - September 29, October 6 and 8 all at 6pm - tickets from ecb.reception@uea.ac.uk
- Walking and cycling trails between Norwich Cathedral and Swardeston
- Material for assemblies in schools and other information at www.edithcavell.org.uk
- Local organiser, Nick Miller is also looking for volunteers to help run some of the activities. You can contact him at: enquiry@edithcavell.org.uk.

Heroic Norfolk nurse

The 100th anniversary of **Edith Cavell's** death on October 12 is being marked with a series of events in Norfolk, London and Brussels as well as a British £5 coin and BBC TV coverage. **Sandie Shirley** reports.

The sacrificial love of this extraordinary nurse from Swardeston near Norwich helped over 200 Allied soldiers escape from behind enemy lines during World War One and resulted in her execution. Within days Edith - who has been celebrated for assisting soldiers on both sides of the war - was hailed as a heroine and a martyr across the globe. An extensive programme is planned during the autumn to help pay tribute to her bravery. In Swardeston there will be guided walks, displays, concerts and a centenary festival in October.

The Forum will be the hub for commemorative events in Norwich with special exhibitions and events at the Cathedral, St Peter Mancroft, the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital, the Record Office and the Castle Museum. Edith Cavell was the daughter of the vicar of Swardeston who taught her to support poor villagers by running mercy errands. From an early age she pledged: "Someday I am going to do something useful. It must be something for people. They are, most of them, so helpless, so hurt and so unhappy." That statement was to set the seal on Edith's life which tragically ended before a firing squad on October 12, 1915 after she was arrested by the German secret police, questioned and held in solitary confinement for over two months. Accused of "assisting men to the enemy" and tried by a military court, the only incriminating document was a postcard from an English soldier thanking her for helping him reach home. She had sewn her diary inside a cushion before her arrest and then burned almost all of it so it did not fall into German hands. During imprisonment she prayed and studied The Imitation of Christ by Thomas a Kempis and when visited by a church minister, the night before her death, she said: "I am glad to give my life, rather than any of my soldiers should have fallen into the hands of the Germans." Later she added: "I know patriotism is not enough. It is not enough to love one's own people. One must love all men and hate none." Edith's strong Christian resolve was fuelled by prayer throughout her life and during her imprisonment. Before her death she said: "I am thankful to have these ten weeks of quiet to get ready. Life was so full and I had no rest and no quiet - now I have it." From governess to nurse, her career included working at two Poor Law Institutions as she rose through the ranks to become a matron. She prayed for the seriously ill at their bedside, made home-visits to newly discharged patients and pressurised suitable convalescent homes to provide care and rest for needy patients, often making



Pictured above, Norfolk nurse Edith Cavell and, below, the cell where she was kept before her execution.

personal donations towards their upkeep. She spent 10 years in deprived areas of London but Edith's experience was further stretched to industrial Manchester. As a Queen's district nurse she assisted at mine and factory accidents and cared for the victims of industrial diseases. Praying for future guidance led to a new direction in 1907 when she began professional nurse training in Brussels. By 1912 Edith was providing more than 100 nurses to three hospitals, 24 schools and 13 kindergartens in Brussels. At the outbreak of war in 1914 she was giving four lectures a week and finding time to care for a sick family and a runaway girl. When Brussels fell, German nurses replaced their English counterparts who were despatched home but Edith and her chief assistant stayed behind. Colonel Dudley Boger and Sergeant Frank Meachin became the first of 200 fugitive soldiers to be sheltered and cared for by Cavell during the next nine months. The men

headed for escape through Brussels since Antwerp had fallen but they were unable to find safe shelter until Edith was approached for help. It would have been contrary to her nature to turn away from anyone in distress - they were given medical treatment and hidden for two weeks. So began a long and dangerous crusade as soldiers were harboured in homes and hospitals despite growing random checks by the Germans. It became difficult to keep undercover activities secret and the German authorities warned that anyone found sheltering Allied troops would be shot. Edith knew the dangers but refused to cease her activities. As she faced her death that October dawn, she said: "Think of me only as a nurse who tried to do her duty." Nick Miller, Edith Cavell website manager, said: "Edith Cavell was a remarkable Christian who imitated Christ in how she lived. Her death was a direct result of her refusal to put others in danger by 'passing by on the other side' - she knew her life was on the line every day for over nine months as she helped soldiers escape to Holland. "She gave up her life that others might live - whilst also nursing German soldiers. She had a sure hold on life the other side of her execution. I am always deeply moved when reading of her calmly reciting the hymn Abide with Me in her cell the night before she died."



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The Portuguese-speaking congregation at Dereham Baptist Church.

Church grew from coffee-shop meeting

Former missionary to Brazil, Don Threadgold and his wife had seen notices on the board in the library in Dereham, alerting them to people in the town speaking Portuguese who had emigrated to the UK - some from Brazil and some from Portugal.

Later a Brazilian lady called Maria came into the Dereham Baptist Church (DBC) office asking 'Posso dar meu dizimo?' and since no one could understand her, Don was called from the coffee shop, to interpret what she was asking. In fact she wanted to give her tithe to the church! Her offering was joyfully accepted.

A friendship started and they decided to start a cell group at Maria's flat, specifically for the Portuguese speaking people and on the very first night two ladies were won to Christ.

Within a few months, with visits from Portuguese speaking believers from King's Lynn where a similar cell group had started, a fast growing need was identified and DBC sought a pastor to lead the group.

Pastor Jorge Damasceno, who had served God for some 15 years in Albania came over to England, supported by the Brazilian and American Baptist Associations, to help meet the growing spiritual needs of the Portuguese-

A coffee shop encounter in **Dereham Baptist Church**, almost ten years, ago literally helped start a church within a church. **Kevin Gotts reports.**

speaking people.

Soon after their arrival in 2006, DBC found a house for Jorge, his wife Mel and their two children and the little house group moved into the main church building and a Saturday 6pm service for the Portuguese-speaking community was established.

Soon they were welcoming visitors from King's Lynn, Thetford and Lowestoft with their numbers increasing to 50-60 people.

As families attended, provision was made for classes for children and teenagers. Leadership classes for their elders were started together with a worship group and activities for the ladies. Bi-lingual services also began to feature in the programme of DBC and friendships were formed.

Jorge and Mel were invaluable in helping their congregation as a greater command of

English was needed in dealing with education for children, health care issues, contact with social services, housing issues and completing documentation.

The reputation of the Portuguese-speaking church, under the leadership of Jorge, was recognised and the opportunity given to meet the Archbishop of Canterbury to explain his role and the establishment of the church in an interview featured on BBC1's Look East programme.

Jorge, who had added so much to the fellowship of DBC, was inducted into the English Baptist ministry, eventually being appointed as full-time assistant minister.

The Portuguese Speaking Church continues to grow under the leadership of Pastor Marcos Hernandez and his wife Marianne, supported by ministers Chris Densham, Jorge Damasceno and Pastor Marcos. Whenever possible they integrate the English and the Portuguese-speaking churches into one body in Christ.

The Saturday evening services, although in Portuguese, are welcoming to English-speaking Christians and likewise the Sunday services welcome the Portuguese speakers. Don has the advantage of feeling 'at home' whichever language is spoken!

Dentist tales extract humour

■ **BOOK REVIEW:** Retired Norfolk dentist and now church leader, Barrie Lawrence, takes a humorous look at his 40 years leaning over the dentist's chair treating patients from heaven and the other place. **Review by Kevin Gotts.**

As a dentist, Dr Barrie Lawrence had up to 40 patients a day pass through his dental surgery for a period of around four decades. The most memorable are included in his new book, "Patients from Heaven - and other places", and whilst many are referred to as friends, others are described in different terms.

The style of writing quickly draws the reader into the stories, reflecting Barrie's skill as an engaging and very humorous after dinner speaker. He starts with those that became friends, or had something that endeared them to him and his staff; others made them laugh, or simply left them feeling better.

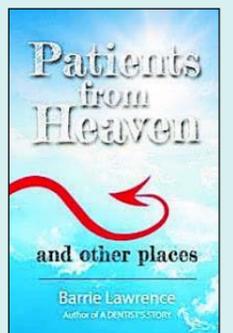
Some names and certain details are changed to protect anonymity and confidentiality. There was, for example, Baron Goldfinger, dressed immaculately and driving a pristine white Bentley who seemed to step off a James Bond movie set, and Misty the flirtatious American lady, who suddenly vanished - probably murdered, said the police. Patient Johnny Cleveland, local singer and comedian, is endeared.

How does he depict patients from the Other Place? His belief as a born-again Christian, he says, changed everything including the way he sees other people. Courteously, he also sees this category of people with emotions, maybe struggling with relationships or finance. Chapters like "Blue Murder, a Pink Ear, Bubbles and a Bad Smell", "Nice and Nasty" and "The Gift of the Gab" have to be read.

Barrie balances his stories with patient's perceptions about him, with one patient calling him "a dangerous man".

His previous title "A Dentist's Story" concluded with an appendix of dental jokes and this time there is an appendix of anecdotes concerning encounters with members of the police force. Chapters including "The Man in Black", "Idiot!", "The Insurance Fraud?" and "A Carnivorous Villain" leave the reader entertained and bursting with laughter.

This book can easily be read and savoured like a meal with many courses over a period or devoured in one long sitting. Ideal as a holiday read and to pass on. Barrie's books are available from Amazon, Jarrolds and all good booksellers.



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Church is alive and well

■ City church is Alive and well in Norwich! ...It has its first birthday soon, so Sally Erskine went to catch up with pastor Phil Thorne and his wife Jo, to see how things are going.

"It's called 'Alive' as a statement to the city that Jesus is alive, doing amazing things; active in his church, healing and answering prayer," Phil tells me passionately.

Formerly known as City Church since 1985, there are consistent themes in both churches: a love of church in many locations, united and prioritising, bringing in God's presence. "Often when people bring in someone for the first time, they are surprised by the contemporary approach and surroundings, but are met by the presence of God," says Phil.

Alive Network links to churches near the eastern coast, including Norwich and Wymondham. Also Lincoln, Hykeham, Grantham and Scunthorpe, with the philosophy of interdependence at its core, because "together we can do more".

Phil cites results of this network, being: 1. The biggest number of new converts in his church making decisions for Jesus in one year 2. The ability to put £100,000 - across the churches - into various projects locally and internationally; Tear Fund Cambodia being the largest recipient 3. The sharing of speakers from other locations

Alive Norwich moved out of the Mercure Hotel recently and into a chapel which it owns in Cowgate, having first thoroughly renovated it.

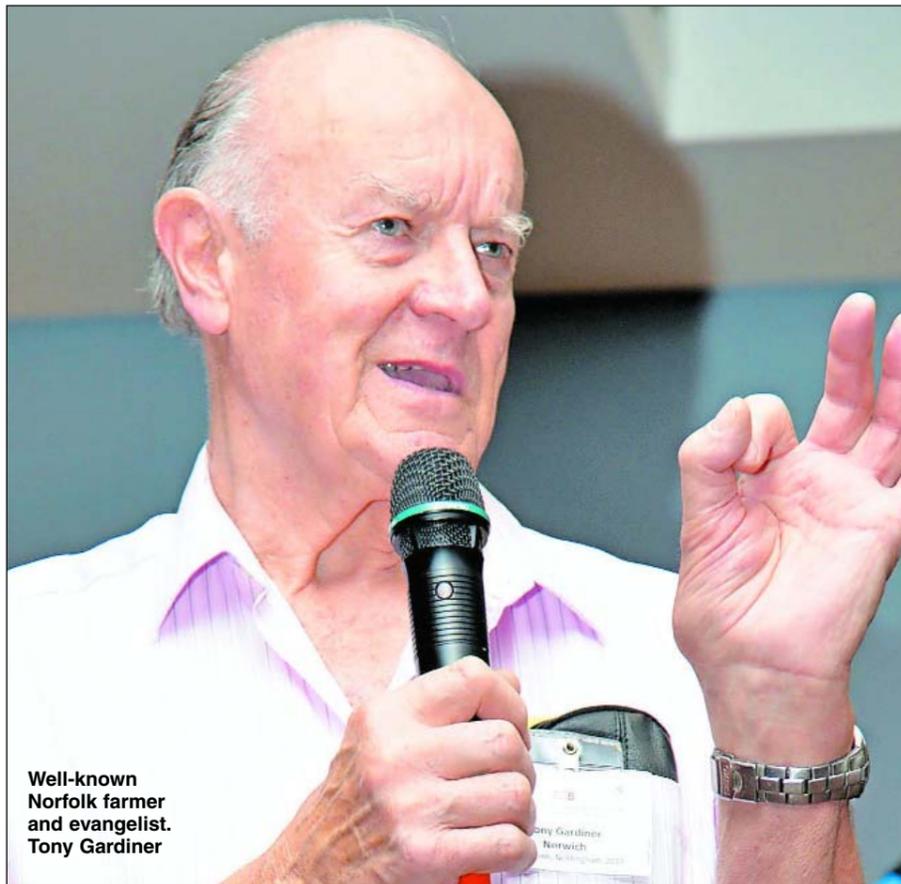
A chapel on Nelson Street is also owned by Alive. They purchased it in 1996, and it is in the process of major refurbishment. The aim is to have it ready by the autumn.

"We are hoping to see both buildings used - maybe one for a service on Sunday and the other on a Wednesday," says Phil. "Our strapline is "each one teach one" - we want to see new people coming to Christ as a result of us all reaching out to our doorstep world; a balanced approach which we hope will help the church as a whole to grow."

www.alivechurch.org.uk/norwich.html

Tony was a man with a message

Hundreds of people attended a memorial service for well-known Norfolk evangelist and farmer, Tony Gardiner, at Soul Church in Norwich on August 19. Mike Wiltshire reports.



Well-known Norfolk farmer and evangelist Tony Gardiner

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The large congregation of family, friends and colleagues heard heartfelt tributes to Tony as "a big man with a big heart . . . who loved a joke . . . who lived for others . . . a true spiritual father."

From Belgium, Rik van Neste, director of the Full Gospel Businessmen in that country, told how Tony led him to faith in Christ, 28 years ago - Tony's legacy lives on in the lives of hundreds of Christians in that nation.

John Wright, international director of FGB, said: "Tony was always totally positive - he saw every crisis as an opportunity for God."

Many tributes were paid to Tony, aged 79, a man with a message who travelled 'two million miles' around the world, sharing his story. He had a remarkable testimony of 'God's life-changing power'. He estimated that he and his wife, Jean, travelled over two million miles in 35 years, sharing the Gospel "since God changed our lives, miraculously, especially through the FGB."

But his early life was very different. Tony had been a nominal Christian and the lay chairman of 23 village churches - but he frankly admitted his life was "a mess in the battle to earn money to live an extravagant lifestyle" which led to severe depression, despite 26 medical pills a day.

Then a new vicar in his village spoke about "the need for heart-felt conversion and the Spirit-filled life" - a new message to Tony who,

surprisingly, was encouraged to visit an evangelical retreat in Darmstadt, Germany, led by a well-known woman of faith and prayer, Mother Basilia Schlink (1904-2001)."

Tony returned from Germany "a totally new man... born-again, trusting Jesus... and delivered from depression and drug dependency!"

For the rest of his life, Tony combined mission work at home and abroad with farming interests, especially in training operators of combine harvesters. He became a regional director of the FGB and an advisor to the Women Aglow fellowship. Tony and Jean had three children - and their family home, aptly named "Shalom" (meaning "Peace"), was at Green Farm, Shelfanger, Diss.

"Every day is a bonus for us," Tony said recently. Driving hundreds of miles across the UK to a meeting for a group of perhaps 60 people "was a small matter" compared to the joy of seeing even one person coming to know Jesus Christ, or seeing another healed, or lives transformed by the power of God."

"This life in Jesus is an absolutely wonderful treasure-house of miracles," said Tony who was also continuing his nationally-known work of "training tractor drivers to plough and operate combine harvester." He and Jean also managed to help run two Alpha Courses a week at Norwich Family Life Church (now Soul Church).

"Wherever we are, God has prepared a people who are desperate

for meaning in their lives, and needing a fresh touch of God, which we know is only possible through the promises of the word of God."

Tony was active on Twitter and had 12,700 followers and 44,000 Tweets. Very poignantly, his final Tweet message was from the classic hymn Amazing Grace. He quoted the verse - which was also his life message, because he overcame the destructive depression of his early life:

*"My chains are gone,
I've been set free,
My God, my Saviour has ransomed me,
And like a flood His mercy reigns,
Unending love, amazing grace."*

Tony, who was married to Jean for 56 years, had surprising talents: he was a gifted artist, "who also loved speed and all things mechanical" and became one of Europe's foremost experts in training farmers to use combine harvesters and other machinery.

Reflecting on Tony's Christian testimony, Michael Cant, Norwich architect and long-time FGB colleague, said: "There are not many people you meet in life who you can say are heroes of faith. For me, and I am sure for many others, Tony was one of them. His contagious enthusiasm, his breath-taking stories and his unwavering faith are all quite monumental icons of what it is to be a Christian. His legacy will be long remembered and often retold to inspire the new generation of Christians."

"Tony 'fought the good fight of faith' - active to the end, and he finished well. We will greatly miss him."



The Rev Paul Burr with some of his work.

Painting palette for the canvas of life

When the canvas of life is difficult, **Rev Paul Burr** takes up his palette to release a new surge of joy and beauty to feed the soul. **Sandie Shirley** reports.

The vicar of Swardeston, who celebrated ten years at the parish this summer, began to paint seven years ago. Today his creative series are a celebration of nature that include seascapes, trees in blossom, and harvest bales in summer. He largely uses a palette knife to apply texture and form and hours later he delivers a message of life, light and beauty.

Painting for Paul touches deep emotions. 'It's about joy. Joy is an elusive thing - it often comes unbidden. But the spiritual life invites us to allow joy to become a way of seeing. Jesus calls us to open our eyes. 'Consider the lilies of the fields'. Painting is a way of 'considering' - a form of meditation."

Painting can be a diversion to pain, says Paul - a lawyer turned minister. When a holiday was cut short by a bereavement, he received an unexpected request for a painting for a church fund-raising exhibition and auction.

He walked into the surrounding fields near the rectory and began to recreate what he saw with unexpected energy, and has continued

ever since. It heralded a turning point from his previous attempts and a new burst of life and joy.

"I think I will always paint now," says the minister. "Painting makes you see the world differently. Beauty is everywhere, though we often fail to notice. But painting makes you attend to the beauty in the ordinary - and it feeds the soul."

"Everything God makes is beautiful. 'The heavens tell out the glory of God and the earth declares his handiwork.' When he looked at his creation 'God saw that it was good' - which means he saw it was beautiful!"

"Being created in God's image means we are made to be creative. Creativity isn't an indulgence - it's what we are meant to be about, an essential part of being human."

"Things look different with the changing light and passing seasons - so there's endless variety. It means you can paint the same thing again and again. There are two trees in the water meadow I've painted a dozen times. And when I saw three trees in blossom together it was such a magnificent sight it inspired another set series of studies."

Paul traces his sense of call to ministry back to a moving and enduring encounter with God just before his law finals at university. "I'd found it very difficult to find peace but sensed that if I prayed I would find God and find peace. Through prayer, the way I saw the world began to change. I was encouraged to read the Bible again in a modern version and it became hugely alive especially St Paul's words about God's love being poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. It has been a framework for making sense of the world ever since and I had a strong sense that God was calling me to serve him."

Working out exactly what that meant took time. Paul completed his legal training and worked as a solicitor as he took a long and patient route towards ordination. "Vocation isn't just for those in paid Christian ministry - Jesus calls all of us. Following Jesus isn't just doing things he asks of everyone; it also means learning who God has made me to be and what he wants me to do. Learning to paint has become part of what I think God has called me to."

Norwich curate set to ride from London to Paris

NORWICH church curate Edward Land has set himself the challenge of cycling from London to Paris this autumn to raise money for YMCA Norfolk.

Edward, who is curate at St Thomas Norwich, will start the 280-mile journey from Brixton in London on October 28, along with five friends and will end in Paris on October 30.

The route they are taking will go from Brixton to Newhaven where they will catch the ferry to Dieppe and from there they will cycle to the capital, Paris. The group's aim is to average just over 85 miles a day to complete the journey.

Edward, who is currently in training for the event, said: "I have always loved sport and I try to cycle everywhere, so you might see a vicar on a bike around town."

St Thomas, Norwich has a close link with YMCA

Norfolk and before becoming curate for the church, Edward was a Youth Minister. When asked why he was fundraising for YMCA Norfolk, Edward said: "I've always had a heart for young people and youth work. I have great admiration for the work YMCA does to help young people."

To add to the challenge Edward will be completing the ride on his "trustworthy 1970s 5 Speed Raleigh Carlton".

If you would like to sponsor Edward and raise money for YMCA Norfolk please visit www.virgin-moneygiving.com/team/Londontoparis15



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Warrior dancers set for Norfolk



The Maasai Warriors outside Wymondham Abbey during last year's performance.

The tribal chants and dance of Kenya's **Osiligi Maasai Warriors** have held UK audiences spell-bound during 14 tours and now they are returning to Norfolk on 26 September. **Sandie Shirley** reports.

LAST NIGHT OF THE PROMS

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For tickets contact: stefanie.pearson@ymcanorfolk.org, 01603 621263
or alisongibson@norwichcitadel.org.uk, 01603 620747

Fundraising event in aid of

YMCA NORFOLK



The African troupe of devout Christians who have performed for royalty will showcase their talent at Glen Lodge Golf Club, Bawburgh, during a charity ball run by the Mudeka Foundation.

Over 2000 national performances have brought new and growing prosperity to the troupe's poor drought-hit community in Olepolos. A school, clinic, church and orphanage have been built thanks to Suffolk pensioner, John Curtin, who forfeited retirement to put his Christian faith to work to inspire a legacy of giving through organised tours including Wymondham Abbey and Cromer parish church last year.

The retired theatre producer says he has a very simple Christian outlook: "I love people - love is what it is all about and God is love."

He adds: "The Charity, Osiligi Charity Projects, which was formed as a result of the tours, has been amazing, providing generous support for the building projects and 160 child sponsorships."

John first visited the Kenyan troupe in 2002 to follow-up a request to organise a tour at the Suffolk school where he worked part-time. He was impressed by their rhythm and harmony despite no musical training and moved with compassion by their poverty. Before long he retired and became a tireless campaigner and later overseeing a charity to ease their plight.

The on-going building projects have also brought clean water and solar heating to the community and this

year the money will further an orphanage and safe house as well as child sponsorships.

During John's initial visit to Olepolos, the destitute community lived in huts made of cow dung, urine, mud and straw, lit by dangerous kerosene lamps. "They walked five kilometres twice a day to get water from a stagnant pool that was used by all the local animals. Their 'church' was an acacia tree. Their 'school' was a series of dilapidated buildings and the children had almost no text or exercise books," he said.

Organising the annual tours from August to October is a huge task and last year John's wife died two weeks before the tour began. Despite numerous calls for support, John continues to handle the bulk of the work alone, but since 2009 Jim Wilkie has organised the tour in Scotland, Cumbria and the North East.

This year John has organised 107 engagements and is expected to speak 120 times. Shortly after the troupe's return, he will begin bookings for 2016. "I could not survive without my faith but it is satisfying to see what has been achieved," he said.

Every member of the seven-strong troupe supports a large family so their earnings, including handicraft sales, are widely distributed. The members often rotate, allowing more of the community to benefit.

"There is a long list of people who want to come, but three of the present performers have been to the UK at least eight times. Each stunning performance is an unforgettable experience,"

said John. "Since there are no Play Stations or other technological temptations, they learn to sing, move and jump, just like they live - in perfect harmony!"

"They are humble and gentle and loyalty and friendship are everything to the Maasai. When they arrive on tour I am with them almost continually and over time they have never had an argument. They are great team players!"

Polygamy is common among the Maasai tribe, explains John, but as Christians this, together with female circumcision, is unacceptable to the troupe.

"They pray a lot and often when we get home late at night. Their faith carries them through poverty, as it does in many third world countries."

"They love the comfortable, UK accommodation, with hot showers, electricity, satellite TV and Kentucky Fried Chicken. They enjoy these the night before they go home yet the day they return it is as if the tour never happened. No-one has been tempted to leave their community to live in Nairobi, 30 miles away, however tough life is. Despite all our comforts they believe we have somehow succumbed to 'want' that rules our lives."

"Together with their families they have no mains electricity, suffer repetitive droughts but always do so with a smile on their faces, whatever the adversity and this, together with their love of life, must teach us all a valuable lesson."

www.osiligiwarriors.co.uk,
info@osiligi.org, tickets:
mfdinnerball@gmail.com,
01603 758119
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