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... bringing HOPE to the people of Shropshire

Ten Stories of Hope from Shropshire



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Ten Stories of Hope from Shropshire

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Shropshire Hope will be supporting the HOPE 2018 initiative. Watch out for more details on our website and through our regular email updates.



www.hopetogether.org.uk

NEWPORT

When I visited the group the pub was packed; but interestingly when the group started meeting it was much quieter: a sign of God's blessing?

I wonder: are there public places that you could use for some of your church events and activities?

Rev. Chris Densham
Ecumenical Mission Enabler Telford & Shropshire



Have you got a story of hope to share?

If so, we'd love to hear from you.

The vision of Shropshire Hope is to see **community transformation** as the Good News of Jesus is demonstrated in our lives and proclaimed throughout Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin.

Our inspiration from the words of **Isaiah 58:12** (New Living Translation):

*"Some of you will rebuild the deserted ruins of your cities.
Then you will be known as a builder of walls
and a restorer of homes."*

For more information about Shropshire Hope, log onto our website:

www.shropshirehope.co.uk

NEWPORT

Bible Study in The Barley

Like many others, Churches Together in Newport has traditionally held ecumenical Lent Study Groups. However this year the day time group decided they'd like to try something different. They approached the management of one of the pubs in the High Street about the possibility of meeting there and they were welcomed with open arms. The staff at The Barley reserved a table for the group each week and it has been so successful they have continued to meet there ever since.



When I joined the group one Monday morning eight different folk from a variety of Christian traditions were there.

I asked them about how they felt meeting in a public place had changed the way they approach the study. I was surprised when one person said they seemed to be more relaxed in this setting than they had been in a home. The others agreed, and someone added "we seem to laugh much more too". Someone else commented that no-one needed to worry about hosting so they could all focus on the study.

The group are also really keen to finish at

12 noon in order to honour the business and not take up a table over the lunch period. This really helps them stay focused on the passage and their study and any blind alleys are quickly avoided.

As we were talking someone remembered that ten years previously she and a church leader had prayed in all the pubs in the town, and this was the one they'd started in.

On Good Friday, following the Churches Together Open Air Act of Witness which takes place just outside The Barley, the group arranged for tea and coffee to be served after the event for everyone who attended.

INTRODUCTION

God is at work in Shropshire!

We're sure you knew that anyway, but across our County many great things are happening and we thought it would be good to gather ten stories together for your encouragement.

These ten examples are just a selection and we could have included many other stories of Hope. We could have mentioned that across the county 68 Churches are involved in running *Open the Book* in local Primary Schools. We could have included the many Food Banks, Street Pastors and other initiatives that operate in many of our towns but we've selected one story from each of 10 locations to hopefully encourage you.



If you'd like to find out more about any of these initiatives, or maybe start something similar in your area please do get in contact with me.

On behalf of the Shropshire Hope Organising Team

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SHREWSBURY

Bringing hope to our streets

Street Pastors is a national initiative working under the principle of the Urban Trinity - Local Authority, the Police and local churches working together. It originated in Brixton in London because of the gang culture and knife crime in the area. Shrewsbury Street Pastors are affiliated to Ascension Trust, who give us our licence, provide us with our branding, training programme, and help us with advice and guidance.

Our issue here is not knife crime. Shrewsbury Street Pastors was formed nearly 7 years ago following a request by the Shropshire Council and West Mercia Police to Churches Together in Shrewsbury because of the increasing river deaths within the loop of the River Severn.

We have our own board of Trustees, a Senior Management team, a Director of Operations, who deals with the everyday issues of management and strategic decisions and holds regular team leader meetings to address any issues that are occurring on the streets of town.



Our volunteers come from different local Christian churches and we have several different denominations represented. We have volunteers from all over Shropshire as well as Shrewsbury itself. But all are anxious to help us with **“Caring, Listening and Helping”**, the Street Pastors strap line!

We will provide space blankets for those who are cold, flip-flops for those who can't walk in their shoes, water for those who are dehydrated, and lollipops for those whose sugar levels are starting to drop after a long night on the town. It is hard to be difficult and aggressive while trying to un-wrap a lollipop!

MARKET DRAYTON



By 4:30pm, over 1,000 locals lined the street listening to the Christmas story being re-told, cheering the actors and animals along the road, and joining in with the carol singing. Once the nativity scene was completed, the people filed through the Buttercross to admire the scene.

So what was achieved?

Well, over 1,000 people heard again the Christmas story in a way that truly engaged them. We know this both through the looks on their faces, and the feedback we received in the hours and days afterwards. Church and non-church people worked together – new relationships were built, and Jesus' love was shown by the way we invited people to 'come and see'. And in addition to us sharing the goodwill of the Christmas message to the town, the churches have in return received the goodwill of the people. They felt blessed to have experienced something so amazing in *their* town, and we were inundated with requests to make it an annual event.

One local landlord, who puts on a regular quiz night to support charities and good causes, held one to specifically raise funds so Buttercross to Bethlehem could return in 2017.

Which it does – on December 17th.

Mark Savill



MARKET DRAYTON

Buttercross to Bethlehem

Like many market towns, Market Drayton has a historic Buttercross in its centre, which has for centuries been the focal point of the weekly street market.

In early 2016, Methodist Minister Rev Ruth Jeffries suggested that Churches Together in Market Drayton should put on a live nativity in the town to bring the community together and remind them of the real meaning of Christmas.



Many months of planning followed, engaging both the local churches and the wider community. A script was written (including appropriate carols), road closure permission was obtained, a donkey was booked for Mary and Joseph (though it failed to arrive on the day being reluctant to get into the

trailer!), horses were found for the wise men (we don't have many camels in North Shropshire), a brass band established, and costumes were made for a cast of over 30 to process up Cheshire Street and come together to form a live nativity scene under the Buttercross, which included some cattle for that authentic stable aroma.

"...over 1,000 people heard again the Christmas story in a way that truly engaged them"

Invitations were sent out to the whole town (with hundreds attached to randomly placed knitted Christmas Angels!) inviting people to 'come and see the miracle behind the Christmas Tree' (as conveniently, the Town Council always puts one up in front of the Buttercross).

On Sunday 18th December 2016, excitement built during the day, although no-one had any idea how many people would turn up.

SHREWSBURY

We work closely with our sister charity Shrewsbury Ark looking after the homeless on the streets late at night.



We meet at 10.00pm on a Friday and Saturday evening for prayers asking to be taken to where we are needed, and the "right" words to use in each situation we come across, before commencing our shifts. We usually aim to finish about 4.00am, with more prayers for good rest following an interesting and rewarding night on the streets.

All our Street Pastor volunteers are regular church goers, as they must have a reference from their church minister, must be over 18, but there is no upper age limit. Our eldest Shrewsbury Street Pastor is now in her 80's, but a degree of fitness is required, and an ability to stay awake until the not so wee small hours.

"a year before Shrewsbury Street Pastors started there were 7 river deaths directly connected to drugs or alcohol; in the last six years this has been reduced to a total of 3 deaths!"

Do come along and join us, come out as an observer, if the idea appeals to you.

Alternatively, we have a devoted team who help us behind the scenes with administration, fund-raising and promoting us around the area and we would welcome your help.

Steve Jones
Director of Operations - Shrewsbury Street Pastors

ALBRIGHTON

Thy Kingdom Come

The Churches of the Albrighton area decided to celebrate **'Thy Kingdom Come 2017'** in a different way than we had before. After meetings with Rev. Mary Thomas, we decided that we would put **an event on the Albrighton Village Green**. The Church reaching out to children, their families and friends in a fun and loving Christian way.

We also decided that we would advertise our event as **'Thy Kingdom Come/Try Praying/Community Prayer on the Green'**. Quite a mouthful but bursting with wonderful opportunities to welcome the community and offer friendship and hospitality.



The free event took place from Monday 29th May to Friday June 2nd 10.00am – 2.00pm daily. We erected three large gazebo's each day for prayer/quiet time, children's/adult's crafts and one for free refreshments of tea/coffee, cakes and biscuits. All the cakes and biscuits were donated by the ladies of the churches.

We provided outside play toys, e.g. large wooden Jenga and Connect games, skittles, hoola hoops, twister and tots ride-ables, lots of bubbles to send to God in prayer and a Prayer Walk/Treasure Hunt around the village. Plenty for everyone to enjoy.

"it can be a little scary moving out of our Church buildings, out of our comfort zone, but it is something we need to do if we are...to spread the Good News"

On Monday 29th the weather was awful, typical Bank Holiday weather. But we weren't disheartened, it gave us the opportunity to set up and look at what we thought we could improve on. Just a few people came as well as the volunteers for the day.

OSWESTRY

Each day started early in the morning with a time of leaders' prayer before the children arrived, and concluded with a time of prayer at the end of each morning session.

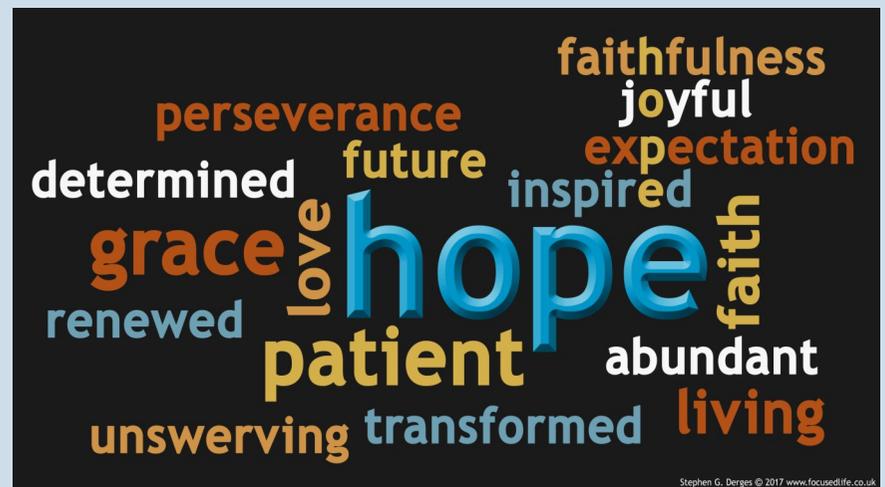
The Holiday Bible Club was overseen by **Mark Addison**, the Youth and Families Minister of Holy Trinity Church, Oswestry who is studying part-time at Oak Hill College, London.

Besides many adult helpers there were also fifty junior leaders, aged eleven to eighteen. Some of these came from other churches and all were given teaching and activities in the afternoons and evenings. The whole team knit really well together.

Geoff Nankivell

Watch out for more information on activities throughout Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin as part of HOPE 2018.

Updates available on www.shropshirehope.co.uk



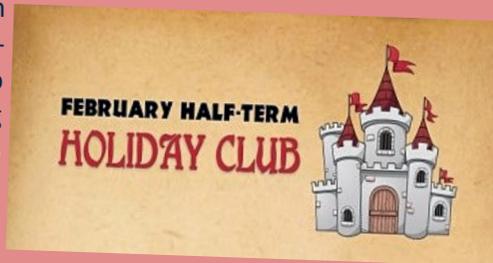
Stephen G. Derges © 2017 www.focusedlife.co.uk

OSWESTRY

King of the Castle Holiday Club

'King of the Castle' was the title for the Holy Trinity Holiday Bible Club which began after the morning service on Sunday 18th February when the Victorian church building in Oswestry was transformed into a medieval castle and courtyard. Work and preparation continued on the Monday as the 90-strong team of variously aged and experienced helpers added the final touches to the decoration. All was now ready for an exciting fun packed time.

The four day Holiday Club ran from Tuesday to Friday when one-hundred or so children aged five to eleven were welcomed to the King of the Castle club and put into different teams. Over the course of the week a huge coat of arms was gradually revealed showing the main truths being taught from John's gospel.



These included that Jesus is:

- The Christ, God's glorious king (John 2:1-11 & 20:30-31)
- The way to God (John 14:1-9)
- The one who died for rebels (John 18:2-5, 28-40, 19:1-20)
- The one who rose again (John 20:24-31).

"Fifty junior leaders, aged eleven to eighteen, helped support adults with around 100 children"

Alongside the Bible teaching, and interwoven with it, were lots of crafts, games, competitions, count downs, and home-made movies filmed in the locality. There were various characters dressed up as knights, princesses and jesters, as well as action songs and a continual supply of refreshments.

ALBRIGHTON

Tuesday 30th the weather was slightly better and a few more locals came along.

Wednesday 30th the sun started to shine. We began the day with a truly moving 9.30 am Holy Communion service on the Green, led by Rev. Mary. After the service, tea/coffee and cakes were enjoyed and children and adults started to come and see what we were all about. Many Helium balloons were launched.

Thursday 1st June was a wonderful day when we planted sunflower seeds in pots. Sitting on the grass with Mum's and children just chatting and playing was such a privilege. We enjoyed an Australian style Sausage Sizzle cooked on the B.B.Q.

Friday 2nd was just amazing, 30 children and 26 adults enjoyed the day with us. Some asked if we would repeat the event next year. What a wonderful end to the week.

If we were to repeat this event during the Spring Bank Holiday week, we would probably begin on Wednesday because of families being on holiday over the previous week-end. And begin as we should with the Holy Communion service and praising God.

As a Church community, it can be a little scary moving out of our Church buildings, out of our comfort zone, but it is something we need to do if we are to show everyone we meet in our daily lives, who we are, what we are about and most of all spread the Good News that Jesus is our Saviour and that he loves each and every one of us.

Jess & Evelyn Harper



WHITCHURCH

More than Food

In January 2013 at a Whitchurch Churches Together meeting the seeds of a Foodbank in Whitchurch were sown. The Rev. Judy Hunt of St. Alkmund's Church reported that she had received a number of callers at The Vicarage seeking help to buy food. The reasons for the requests were varied but what was apparent was there were people in need in Whitchurch and they were coming to the 'church' to help them in their time of need.

A working group was set-up with two representatives from each of the four Churches to investigate establishing a Foodbank. Trussell Trust, a national Christian charity already had established a network of over 300 Foodbanks so were an obvious starting point.

There was however doubt and a degree of scepticism expressed as to whether there were sufficient folk in need in the Whitchurch area to justify a local Foodbank.

Much investigation work was undertaken by the committee into this and sufficient evidence was found to show that there were indeed a number of 'areas of deprivation' in the local geography.

A crisis can occur at any stage in one's life and most people are usually resilient and able to deal with it due to the resources they can access. However for many in our society a crisis can be 'the last straw' that makes life impossible - an unexpected bill, a bereavement or a benefit delay can mean the difference between having food on the table or not. When there are children too the crisis is so much harder to bear.

The Whitchurch Foodbank commenced operation in September 2013. Some 40 volunteers came forward to help, from both the Churches



COUNTY-WIDE

With the wider YMN partnerships including Urban Saints, Youth For Christ and different Anglican Dioceses we launched an evangelistic, activity camp called **West Midlands Spree**, which is now in it's third year.



More than anything, I'm passionate about the people working with young people on the ground; and about enabling Churches to increase their mission to young people and schools.

We have a really strong sense of God blessing work with young people in our region and we want to be right at the centre of it with the people that he's calling.

If you'd like to know more about Catalyst Youth Trust please do contact me.

John Prockter
Director - Catalyst Youth Trust
john.prockter@googlemail.com



COUNTY-WIDE

Catalyst Youth Trust

To sit here writing an article about something called 'Catalyst Youth Trust' is a little bit surreal. If I rewind the clock back to the Autumn of 2011, although we're only talking about six years, we're talking about a time when Shropshire wide youth ministry networking wasn't a thing.



I remember the first networking meeting I had in the context of me being the manager of the newly formed **Bridgnorth Youth & Schools Project**. The meeting was quite basic,

but it sparked a vision for a **Youth Ministry Network** that quickly became the place where youth ministers and schools workers from across the region started to come together for training and inspiration.

The aims of the Youth Ministry Network are:

1. To encourage and equip youth and schools working people
2. To connect them together
3. To send them back to their own places of ministry charged up ready for their next challenges.

"we have a really strong sense of God blessing work with young people in our region and we want to be right at the centre of it"

During the first five years of the Youth Ministry Network, we hosted fifteen networking training days, two winter retreats and attracted larger partnerships and funding, which sparked YMN gatherings in other places with other coordinating charities.

WHITCHURCH

and the community. God provided the funds for the set-up costs in an amazing way with over £9,000 received through Trusts and donations.

In the four years since it was established the Foodbank has fulfilled over 1,250 vouchers and fed over 3,100 people. It has established a network of some 45 Referrers who operate in the area of 'care' and it is they who issue the vouchers. An excellent relationship has been established with these Referrers which then enables us to signpost our clients to the most appropriate areas for help.

The whole principle of the Foodbank is built around 'more-than-food' and in addition to redirecting clients to other agencies we look at other ways of tackling the root of food poverty. One project we have established is an 'Eat Well - Spend Less' (EWSL) course.



This free course comprises six sessions where simple cooking skills are demonstrated, dishes are prepared and budgeting taught. All held in a friendly supportive atmosphere. Three courses have been held to date with very positive feedback.

"in 4 years the Foodbank has fulfilled over 1,250 vouchers and fed over 3,100 people... and established a network of some 45 referrers"

Jesus said, 'I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, thirsty and you gave me something to drink...'

Through the Foodbank and EWSL the Churches in Whitchurch have put Jesus' words into practice. God has truly blessed this work in so many ways.

Allan Scutt

TELFORD

with; 1,764 volunteer hours were worked; plus an additional 270 hours by **YWAM** and **Tom Elliott**. 68 individuals responded making professions of faith in Christ including 14 at a Tom Elliott event on the Friday night, and 53 through the Street work.

OBW 2017: During OBW17, **Tom Elliott** again visited 5 schools over two days and interacted with approximately 640 students. **Kaleidoscope** engagement with Year 5 students was once again a great success staffed by 40 church volunteers. 10 Primary Schools attended bringing 509 students and teachers. We are aware of 33 churches taking part in **Tryprayingtelford** in April supported by the bus advertising campaign for four weeks.



Conclusion

Since TAM began its events in 2014, through OBW each year, approximately 7,769 adults, including many teachers, young people and children, have either attended or been engaged with the Gospel, not counting



Tryprayingtelford in April 2017. In OBWs 2015 and 2016 alone, some 3,241 hours were worked by local volunteers in order to reach Telford with the love of Christ.

The most exciting thing is that these events have opened doors of further opportunity to engage with local communities in Telford, led to greater collaboration between Telford's Churches, and brought God's heart of love in Christ to many people.

Rev Leslie Burke
Pastor - Telford Elim Community Church

HOPE INITIATIVES, SHREWSBURY

"promoting social inclusion by helping each individual realise their potential through uncovering their God-given gifts and talents"

TELFORD

Four Years of Community Events

Telford Area Mission (TAM) was set up in 2013 by a member of the Shropshire Hope Team, and has since put on 4 years of **One Bright Day (OBD)** or **Week (OBW)** events, beginning in 2014, seeking to:



1. Encourage prayer for Telford & Wrekin
2. Develop mission initiatives in conjunction with local Telford churches
3. Establish an on-going legacy of hope in Christ

The first event was **OBD14** - a family-focused day out in Telford

Town Park with 'Make Jesus Known' mission team sharing the Gospel and activities organised by TAM - 31 churches and Christian ministries involved. Although hampered by the weather, it was estimated between 800-1,000 people attended throughout the day with many responding to prayer ministry invitations.

Bring God's Heart to Telford!

OBW 2016: TAM estimate that, during OBW in June 2015, 1,477 hours were graciously worked in total by the local volunteers, plus another 474 hours by a **YWAM Team**, and evangelist, **Tom Elliott**.

During the week, approximately 2,000 adults, young people and children were engaged with many 'not yet believers' nor 'in church' including Year 5 Primary School children through the **Kaleidoscope Project**, and students in the Borough's Secondary Schools. The engagement ranged from decision-making conversion contacts, prayer on the streets, to simple Gospel sharing opportunities.

OBW 2016: In June 2016, 3,720 adults and children were engaged



SHREWSBURY

Developing work readiness through training, qualifications and work experience

Hope Initiatives started as an outreach project of Hope Church in North Shrewsbury. Today it has grown into a charity, which helps young people develop their vocational and personal skills to get work. Hope Initiatives helps young people develop their work readiness through training them in Motor Vehicle Studies. This gives them an opportunity to work in manufacturing and the automotive industry later in their careers.

"supporting people back into employment through coaching, training and volunteering"



Students attending Hope Initiatives may be struggling with formal school due to behavioural challenges, some due to academic aptitude and some are simply hardwired to vocational studies.

Whatever their background, we have found over the eight years we have been offering schools

our services, that given the right encouragement and support, our students flourish and gain skills and confidence for the next stage in their career development. More than 80% of our students graduate from NVQ level 1 to apprenticeships, further relevant studies or associated employment opportunities.

More recently, as well as providing accredited qualifications Hope Initiatives also provides one to one vocational training to students with more complex challenges. Through shorter and more bespoke training, we have seen students gain all important confidence and self-esteem enabling them to believe that they can succeed both with us and in other areas of life.

SHREWSBURY

As well as receiving grants, our services are paid for by schools and other care and educational establishments.

In addition, we have started two Community Interest Companies fully owned by Hope Initiatives.

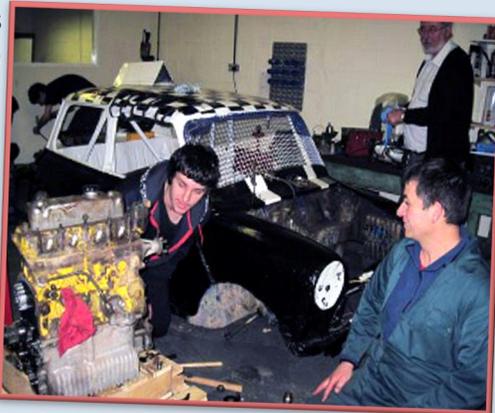
H.I. Garage Services CIC is a professional commercial garage, which provides excellent services to customers. All profits from the Garage are invested into Hope Initiatives and the next generation of young engineers and mechanics.

Our second CIC is HIPO (Hope Initiatives Pre-owned Parts Online). Second-hand car parts are stripped and sold online and all the profits are returned to Hope Initiatives. HIPO provides excellent work experience for unemployed participants. As well as learning to identify and strip car components, they also learn how to sell online, package, and then distribute to customers.

All participants through this project receive ongoing life coaching and employability coaching to support a return to work or training. This project has been fully funded by the European Social Fund and Big Lottery.

If you would like to find how you might help us or we might help you, or if you would like to become a customer of our Community Interest Companies please visit the website and get in touch by logging on to our website - www.hope-initiatives.org.uk

Nick Priggis
Team Leader, Hope Church



LUDLOW

Praying for Revival

Something exciting is happening among the Christian churches of Ludlow!

The leaders of the churches have decided to meet once a month to eat a meal together and then to pray! This is not rooted in a feeling that we ought to pray together, rather we **WANT** to pray together!

How has this happened when the leaders have only met infrequently in the past to pray?

It is simply a move of the Holy Spirit upon the hearts of the leaders; a prompting; a recognition; a desire to pray and to work even more closely together.

As you trace every Christian revival that has taken place right across the globe throughout the centuries, each one has always begun with a small group of people choosing to set time aside – and pray together. Other meetings become less important, business meetings have to wait – the urgency prior to any God given revival is for Christians, regardless of denominational label, to join together – in prayer. This is now happening in Ludlow, among its church leaders.

New initiatives are being prayerfully considered and put into action - an ecumenical Alpha course; an ecumenical Dementia Friendly Church; ecumenical family worship, with the churches coming together to praise and worship; an opportunity to witness together on the streets of Ludlow - and much more to follow!

I believe great things await all those who lay aside denominational differences and choose to work together – as one.

Simon Lambourne
Minister – Ludlow Baptist Church

