



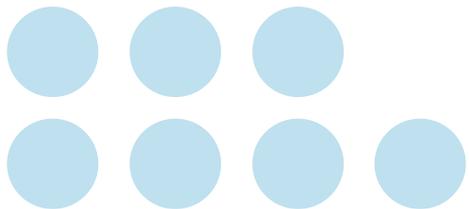
# 7 Stories of Hope

[www.shropshirehope.co.uk](http://www.shropshirehope.co.uk)

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# Hope



Finally all met up at the School Hall to celebrate the last station – **The Resurrection.**

Different people over the years have delivered the message and this year it was done in a contemplative way. Before leaving, pupils were offered a “Real Easter egg” and Easter story leaflet.

This year we welcomed; 6 new volunteers, one team, were outnumbered by males! Some of us shared our cardboard testimonies. We also invited, Roots Christian Dance Company to perform to “Mary’s Song,” as pupils contemplated Jesus’ Life. This dance was later performed at Shrewsbury’s Passion Play.

*Johanna Woodhouse  
Craven Arms Easter Experience Team*

#### *Editorial*

We are aware of many churches around the County hosting different “Experience” events. We are very grateful to Craven Arms for sharing how they have very successfully worked together across the Churches and Schools of their town.



*The Garden of Gethsemane*

# Easter Experience

## CRAVEN ARMS EASTER EXPERIENCE CONTINUED

**The Garden of Gethsemane, Station** - Alone, held at St Andrews Community Church.

We dramatised, Jesus praying in the garden, pupils held a glass pebble, as they quietly thought about a time when they have felt alone, as comforting bible verses were read.

Pupils were invited to immerse their hand holding the pebble into a bowl of warm water to represent God's love embracing them and to release the pebble, if they wanted to, over to God. After drying hands they were handed a red acrylic heart, to keep, as a reminder that God loves them and is always with them.

**They then, moved onto, The Crucifixion, Station** - Sharing our Sorrows, also at St A's.

We are fortunate to be able to borrow a hand painted depiction of Christ Crucified with large silhouette tear drops in the background. The pupils wrote a prayer or thought on a paper tear drop which they then placed under the cross. Many heart rendering prayers were written.

The children are reminded that the Cross has become a sign of hope for anyone who is suffering.

On ripped strips of red paper pupils were asked to write or draw something that makes them feel sad or angry which they hammered and nailed to the wooden cross, when finished this looked dramatic.

*"My favourite part was the tear drop board and the message that we had to pin to the cross". Yasmine.*



## INTRODUCTION

When I first started in this role as Ecumenical Mission Enabler for Telford & Shropshire I was greatly impressed, as I travelled around the County, seeing the Church in action. The breadth and quality of the engagement and commitment to local communities was truly impressive and it stimulated me to put together the little booklet Ten stories of Hope from Shropshire. If you haven't seen this then you can download a copy from the Shropshire Hope website.

At the time I commented that it could easily have been Twenty Stories of Hope, and recently it was suggested that I produce some form of follow up and very quickly Seven Signs of Hope came together. As ever, these seven stories are the tip of the iceberg of all the good things going on in our County.

We trust that you are encouraged as you read the stories.

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Richard Done from Woodlands Ice Cream and Rev Phil Wright



LIKE 'MORE THAN A SUNDAE' ON FACEBOOK



Afterwards they designed a keepsake bookmark with a cross design which gets laminated. It is hoped this might prompt some conversation when they return to school and home.

*"I liked the palm tree bit when we got to make book marks and write on stones."* Wrote Amy, one of the pupils.

### Servant King, Station at the Methodist Church

Pupils heard the story of Jesus washing his disciple's feet and were given the opportunity to wash their fingers.

*"I especially liked the Servant King,"* a quote from pupil, Melisa.

In the same venue they experienced the station, **Remember Me.** The Last Supper was laid out on low tables with grapes and bread to show that when Christians meet together today they will often share the bread and the wine to remember the last meal that Jesus had with his friends before he died.

*"When we were told about the servant king, I realised a tiny bit more about Easter, the same with the Last Supper,"* explained Yasmine. *"I loved the Last Supper part,"* said Joseph, and Bethany thought the last Supper was *"surprisingly amazing!"*



Palm Sunday



The Last Supper

Cont...

# CRAVEN ARMS EASTER EXPERIENCE

*"We had an exhilarating experience"* quote from a teacher.

This was our Easter Experience 2019 in Craven Arms.....

*"And it was spectacular!"* Bethany, primary school pupil.

If you haven't tried The "Experience Easter," which originates from Gloucestershire Diocese, we encourage you to have ago. Packs can be requested from their website.

The Churches in town, work together to put this Experience on and we are now in our 6th biannual year of inviting local primary schools to visit four venues in our town where they experience 6 easily set up stations depicting different parts of the Easter Story. Instructions are clear and scripts ready to read out, along with ideas for making the experience interactive and activities multi-sensory.

This year we welcomed 70 pupils, aged 9 to 11 years and their teachers, from 5 primary schools. Prayer, good planning and organisation are essential; with a clear schedule of who should be where and when, as we divided the schools into three groups which then visited three venues simultaneously. Each of the groups, at their first venue hears the whole Easter Story read to them before starting on their experience. Finally all meet back at the School Hall for the Resurrection Celebration Station, before leaving for lunch at their own schools at midday. Yes, it is completed in a morning!

This is how we did this year's Easter experience, which we have adapted to our venues, resources and each teams talents over the years.

**Palm Sunday, Station called 'Hopes and Dreams'** at the Pilgrim Centre

The children chose a stone and wrote or drew their hope or dream for the future. As pupils walked along the pathway towards a cross, they are invited to draw around their foot in chalk and write in their name, as they get cheered and waved along with palms (Laurel and Leylandii).



# MORE THAN A SUNDAE

It's amazing how creative the Church can be, and More than a Sundae is one such example. I can also vouch for the quality of the coffee and the fantastic waffles. (Someone had to check them out!)

More than a Sundae: Cellar Church Ellesmere

More than a Sundae is much more than a clever play on words. It sums up the reality of Church life across Shropshire, and indeed the UK. More than Sundae is the brainchild of Cellar Church in Ellesmere, which was planted about five years ago. The church initially met in the cellar below the Town Hall but now meets every Sunday in Ellesmere Town Hall.

More Than A Sundae opened in a former restaurant in the town centre on April 6 this year, teaming up with local producer, Woodlands Ice Cream from Erbistock. On the opening day they served more than 250 people in the day and it has been busy ever since.

They specialise in ethical products, compostable materials and organic ingredients where possible (Woodlands Ice Cream is manufactured just 5 miles away in Erbistock). As part of the decision-making process and to get to know the producer (and his cows) better the church spent time at Woodlands understanding how the manufacturing process worked.

As Pastor Phil Wright says: "More Than A Sundae is the culmination of both a not-for-profit business and a community hub, where local people during the mornings will find different events and groups meeting. Between the hours of 2-7pm it runs as an ice cream and waffle house offering local produced organic ice cream and a place where families and friends can come and enjoy time together. Then in the evenings More Than A Sundae will host church ministries related to church life but also to community-based projects.

As a church we see this as an opportunity to engage with our community, introducing Jesus face to face. We believe that the great commission given to the followers of Christ in Matthew 28 tells us we cannot simply stay in our churches hoping people will come to us but says we need to 'Go'. As far as we are aware this is the first of its kind in the county and probably in the country to combine community activities and such a business concept."

# A PASSION FOR WITNESS

On the morning of Good Friday, 2019, Christians from churches all over Shrewsbury began to gather in the centre of town, first actors, then Street Pastors and other volunteers who finally came together for something that many had been anticipating for some time.

For many years Shrewsbury churches have come together to take part in what has come to be called the 'Good Friday Walk of Witness'. Until this year, the walk had largely lost its witness and had become what I call a 'holy huddle' where only the churched feel welcome and those passing by only see the backs of those listening to a homily and singing mostly forgotten hymns. To some people my analysis may seem unkind, but both my wife and I were honestly deeply disturbed when we witnessed the 2018 so called walk of witness.

To both of us, anything claiming the description 'witness' in the context of a Christian gathering, means some sort of evangelistic outreach where our faith is not only on display for others to see, but where all people who can see or hear what is happening are actively offered the opportunity to engage in whatever manner they are willing to do so and that simply did not happen in 2018. We decided then that we had to assist as we could to change this. When we heard that Churches Together in Shrewsbury and Shrewsbury Street Pastors wanted to do exactly that, with prompting from the previous Bishop of Shrewsbury, Mark Rylands, we were in!

Ian Peake of Churches Together in Shrewsbury and Steve Jones of Street Pastors spearheaded adding a passion play, which my wife Ruth soon joined up with. They worked hard to reach out to local churches to recruit actors, costumes, stage designers and builders, audio systems, an outreach team and others to make this event possible. I can't give enough kudos to them for what they managed to pull together. I had the easy job of organising and overseeing the outreach team which mostly consisted of a good number of Street Pastors, Pastor Daniel Jenkins of Wellspring Apostolic Church and number of congregants from the church where I minister, Holy Trinity Church with St Juliane Belle Vue.

We believe that CVFS has been an instrument of renewal in our local congregations. We certainly hope so! At times the going has been tough spiritually and also challenging in terms of commitment and time but we have pressed through and are very thankful for the relationships we have made and deepened over the years: deepening relationships rather than increasing numbers. Where we go next, and how, is up to the Lord. We have had a prophetic word this year that God is doing a new thing, so we expect that to happen. We will be seeking the Lord in the next few months about His ways forward.

We certainly pray that as His Kingdom is manifest in us, those who have not yet heard the good news will ultimately be impacted. That renewal of the church will be a precursor to revival and evangelism.

Watch this space!

*CVFS meets on the second Friday of each month at Newcastle on Clun Community Centre at 7:30 pm. Refreshments provided.*



Clun Valley



# CLUN VALLEY FILLING STATION

The Filling Station Trust was set up by Revd. Richard Fothergill in March 2006. In September 2003 Richard had a vision of Prayer & Praise meetings affecting towns, villages & suburbs throughout the UK and bringing unity and renewal to communities and restoration in people's lives. Shortly after this he started meeting with a number of like-minded people on a regular basis for fellowship, unity, praise and worship and this was the beginning of what would become the first Filling Station. That meeting was re-launched in March 2006 as The Filling Station in Box village, West Wiltshire and as people attended they asked him to help them set up "Filling Station" in their towns.

We have five Filling Stations running in Shropshire, each with their own unique identity, and each full of the life of God. This article describes the life of the Clun Valley Filling Station, but equally we could have asked the folk in Bridgnorth, Craven Arms, Knockin, or Leebotwood. You can find more details at [www.thefillingstation.org.uk](http://www.thefillingstation.org.uk)

Clun Valley Filling Station started around five years ago. It's actually quite hard to remember when we first began! At CVFS we have been blessed from the beginning with a desire to worship in a Spirit led way and the people who come to our meetings have responded wholeheartedly. We sing both traditional hymns and the most modern worship songs. Testimonies follow this time of worship and, while people were at first somewhat shy about stepping up to the mike, now we are thankful to have words of knowledge and encouragement given by many.

We have had a wonderful range of speakers and we record their talks to Soundcloud, attracting quite a wide range of listeners from further afield. We have made it a priority to pray as a core group about our speakers and our meetings generally, so we have been blessed with the Holy Spirit's leading in topics and themes over the years. We pray that those who have been a regular part of our monthly meetings have grown spiritually as a result. There is always an opportunity for prayer ministry at the end of our times together.

When the day finally arrived, we were blessed with ideal weather, a largely receptive public with about 370 information packages given out which included a palm cross, a Hope Magazine and a brochure listing all of the churches in and adjoining our town that would be sharing 'the rest of the story', namely about the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth from the grave on Easter Sunday. Many passers by stopped what they had come into town to do when they were invited to join in. Most stayed and watched the re-enacting of the trial of Jesus in front of St. Mary's Church. The crowd grew, including a great number of people who had other plans in town instead joined the walk down Pride Hill to the town square as the crowd continued to grow and most, if not all of them, remained to witness the punishment and crucifixion.

Finally, the passion for witness that my wife and I and many others in the body of Christ in region share was realised on Good Friday 2019. I would say that it was a great success and we did learn a great deal about what we can do to have an even larger impact for the Name and glory of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ on Good Friday 2020.

*Todd Cataldo, Incumbent & Lay Minister,  
Holy Trinity Church with St Julian Belle Vue.*



Shropshire



# 360 BACK GARDEN

The garden in the car park...

360 Back Garden is part of Foodbank PLUS based at Barnabas Community Projects in Longden Coleham, Shrewsbury. Catering for the needs of those finding it difficult to socialise, are looking towards work in the longer term or need that extra bit a special care, the clients engage with gardening, woodwork and outdoor crafts. With only five clients at any one time and one to one mentoring, those attending find it a great way to build confidence, learn new skills and develop new social skills. This can sometimes take months but for many can be years.

The programme runs through Spring, Summer and Autumn and this year we have the privilege of being part of Shrewsbury in Bloom. The 360 Back Garden is just like an everyday Back Garden but the difference is it's in a car park! Most importantly though the gardening, woodwork and skills development is not what is our priority. It's the development of the whole person that is always the key to what we do. The mentors build good 'professional friendships' with the clients and through the medium of outdoor skills development can really get to know them.

Perhaps the most important piece of equipment is in fact our table and chairs. That's where coffee and cake are enjoyed by everyone together and chatting informally becomes an important part of the morning or afternoon. Just today a client chatted for the first time about everyday things happening to him.

Though often nervous and anxious when clients first start, confidence soon blooms as they see their work literally grow or develop in front of their eyes. I was thrilled recently when I strolled into the garden, was grabbed by a young man and he was excitedly able to show me the onions he had planted in beautiful straight lines and how he had tended them, and how they had grown because of his care. Such a privilege to be shown a row of onions in this way. It wasn't just the onions that had grown; it was the confidence of the young man, his self-esteem and his recognition in himself that his work and creativity has contributed to the growth and success of the onions.



engage schools

The most exciting part of this for me is that if GSUS LIVE succeeds, it will be on the back of Christians in churches who have given their time and their focus to young people and our local secondary schools.

Stick with us, there's more to come.

*John Prockter*  
*Director Catalyst Youth Trust*



Telford



# ENGAGE SCHOOLS

You might know this already, but in September 2018 Telford Christians Together and Catalyst Youth Trust partnered together to launch Engage Schools, a coordinated secondary schools ministry for Telford. There has been a definite move of God prompting this project, and we're thrilled to be nine months in on the adventure. Starting a ministry like this is certainly not easy, and there aren't any step by step rules or processes to follow, however as the weeks and months have rolled on, a few things have been obvious.

Firstly, there have been and will continue to be opportunities to work with young people in secondary schools in the Telford area. This is excellent news because the last thing Engage Schools needs to do is to get full in activity before really understanding where it would be best to serve.

Secondly, Telford is not a straight forward town to plant a united schools work in. With housing estates, shopping centres, villages, and market towns all thrown into the one melting pot, it has been essential to take a more in-depth view of what Telford really is. What we've found is that Telford is so eclectic, we really need all five churches together areas to be slightly different projects in their own right.

With 65 churches, it's clear that there are a lot of Christians in Telford to be encouraged by, but this also represents a lot of people that we need to communicate with. However, through conversations with leaders, we've found that we're in an unprecedented time of vision with more and more churches and groups focusing on youth and children's work all at the same time.

Finally, we have 15 secondary schools, which is a lot, but when we take a real look at what is happening locally and break down the current ministry activity, we can see how much is already happening in the area. There's chaplaincy, prayer spaces, assemblies, lunch clubs, visiting speakers, and more than that, there's a hunger for even more.

In this first year, Engage Schools has undertaken the job of researching, networking, and inspiring both churches and secondary schools, and from November we'll be launching our first full secondary school mission GSUS LIVE. GSUS LIVE is going to visit five Telford schools, one school in each of the TCT areas, and in its time with us, it'll impact a minimum of two and a half thousand students.



A previous client of the Back Garden started with us over two years ago, when he was recovering from a severe long term drug addiction. We were privileged to be part of that recovery. He looks unrecognisable as does his life. He now runs his own business, is one of my team leads and I had the privilege (lots of privilege in this job) of going to his wedding recently.

Our ethos is to build community and see lives transformed. It's amazing how a few plants, time, some pieces of wood, basic skills and the energy of committed people can make this happen...and the coffee and cake help too!

*Karen Williams  
Project Lead Foodbank PLUS  
Director Barnabas Community Projects*



Share stories

# PROPHETIC SCHOOL

Back in April 2018, I was asked by one of the leaders of Shropshire Hope if I would set up a Prophetic School for Telford. What was that all about? For some time, I'd been concerned that in our various churches we would often be sharing pictures and words we felt were from God, without necessarily giving them much attention. Then next week we'd have some more and move on – without really going anywhere. Part of the problem was that no-one was making much effort to record these revelations. The other part was that no-one was making much effort to see that such impressions were being reflected on and weighed so they could be recommended (or not) for general consumption and response.

The two of us had recently been recommended to read a book called “Prophetic Company” written by Dan McCollum from one of the Bethel group of churches in California. Dan's book was all about training everyone to recognise and use their unique way of hearing from the Holy Spirit. Then learning how to share what they are hearing and seeing in ways that others can understand, all in a supportive environment of others seeking to do the same.

That seemed good – very good: a supportive company of people and a training framework to teach, encourage and challenge them to have a go for themselves. So I said yes, I would. Both Shropshire Hope and Telford Christians Together were keen to lend their endorsement to the venture, which was very encouraging. Having pulled together an outline programme based on the structure of the one developed by Dan McCollum we held a taster evening in early December 2018. This was designed to give interested folk and their church leaders a feel for what the School would cover. At the taster evening, we anchored the purpose for the School in developing a Company of Prophets who would not only be an encouragement in their home churches but also to the wider church, peoples and communities of the Borough.

Feedback from the taster evening was good, so I carried on, developed the material further and rolled out the School itself in six monthly Saturday sessions. Each session starts with a brief recap of the previous one, followed by two separate lessons on subjects such as “What do you see?”, “Training your senses”, “Prophecy and words of knowledge” and “Prophetic Evangelism”.

It isn't just dry teaching; delegates have been invited to share their own stories, others chip in spontaneously and, most important, there are lots of exercise opportunities where everyone is encouraged to have a go in a safe environment, where we can all learn together.

Not everyone who started concluded that this was the primary gifting they wanted to pursue. However, all have found the lessons they attended to be valuable and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Many delegates have indicated that they want to continue the journey together and be part of a Company of Prophets, in which they can find mutual encouragement and challenge to hear God well and develop what they think they have heard into something digestible for others to benefit from.

Once we've had a chance to reflect, we will look at whether to run the School again and if so, where and how soon. If reading this has whetted your appetite, do please get in touch.

