GOOD NEWS

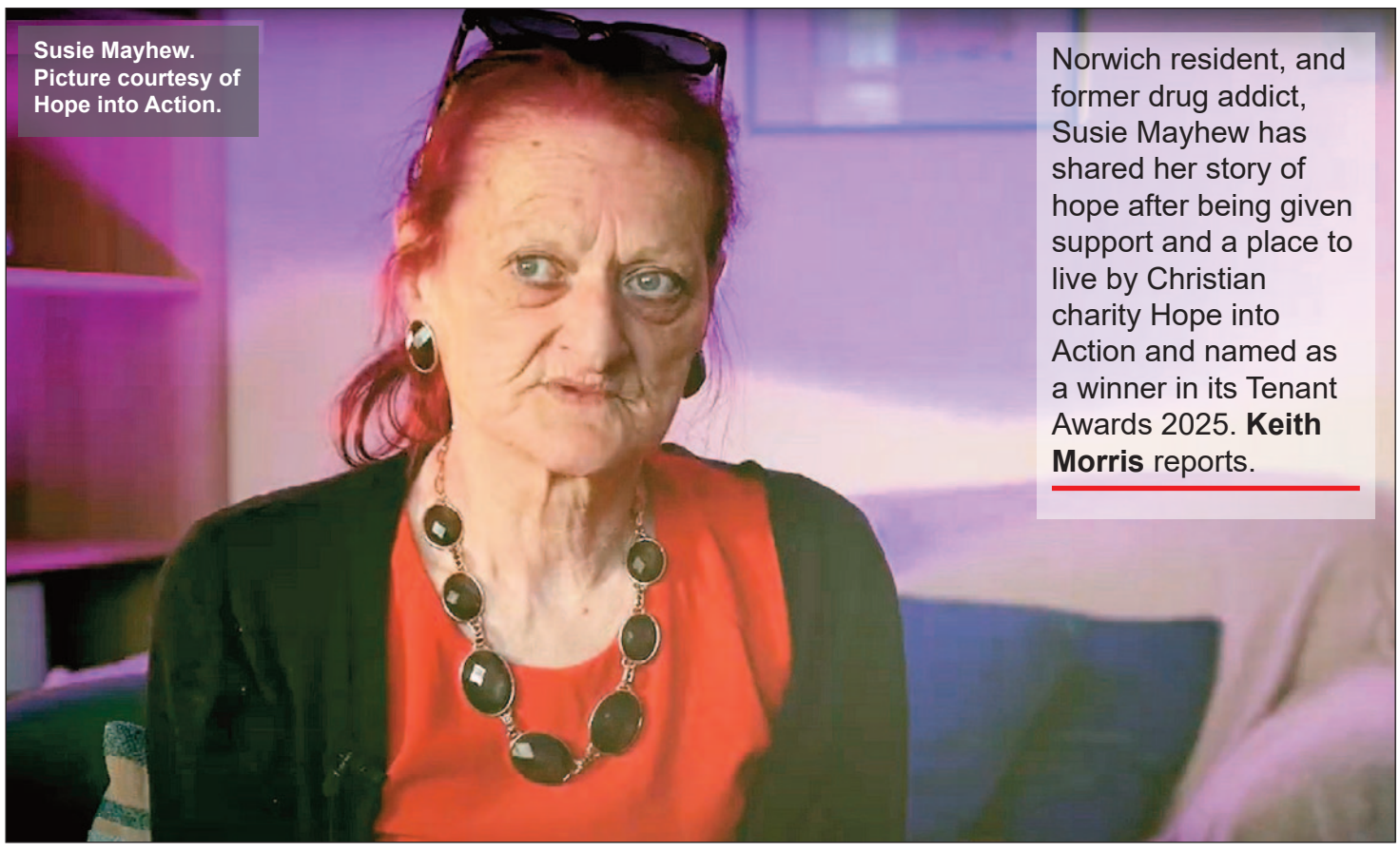
FOR NORWICH & NORFOLK Summer 2025: FREE

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NETWORK NORFOLK CHRISTIAN COMMUNICATIONS AWARDS 2025

Ex drug-addict Susie tells story of hope



Susie Mayhew. Picture courtesy of Hope into Action.

Norwich resident, and former drug addict, Susie Mayhew has shared her story of hope after being given support and a place to live by Christian charity Hope into Action and named as a winner in its Tenant Awards 2025. **Keith Morris** reports.

Susie was also the face of the charity's Restore Hope this Easter Appeal after receiving the Addressing Offending Behaviour Award at the Hope into Action Tenant Awards 2025 recently.

"Imagine having nowhere to sleep, having to sleep in shop doorways and derelict buildings," said Susie. "It's not living – most of the time I wished I was dead. I didn't want to be alive. A horrible life.

"I was from a travelling family, married a violent man, got away from him and ended up on drugs and then in prison. I used the drugs to block everything out. I didn't like to think about what I'd been through and it was the only thing that made me forget.

Jessica is a volunteer from Norwich Anglican Cathedral and is one of Susie's friendship and support befrienders. She said: "When I first met Susie, she was carrying so much and she was scared and was on a real crossroads with where she was going to live and you could see it was weighing really heavily on her.

"I was there when Susie found out she was going to get a place at the Hope into Action House in Norwich and it was a beautiful moment and a brilliant moment for all of us.

"I think this whole project restores hope in the person, that that tiny little seed or flicker of a flame that hasn't gone out, gets ignited," said Jessica.

The award nomination said of Susie: "From 20 years of addiction, homelessness and prison, Susie has been determined to turn her life around. She's a remarkable woman, full of courage and resilience."

Responding to the support from Hope into Action, Susie said: "It's been life-changing. It's given me the will to live and got me back into my faith. I wish you could see a 'before' of me. It's just changed my life, changed it completely.

"It has helped me to get back to my faith as a Christian. I started going to church regularly and wanting to help other people. I want to give something back. I feel alive again, they've given me my life back. It's God, God looking down. He's looking after me."

Hope into Action currently has 13 houses across Norfolk, providing accommodation for 39 people.

Debra Green, Norwich Team Lead explained that "what makes Hope into Action different to other housing organisations and other supported homeless accommodation, is that every house that we have is partnered with a church. The idea of that is that the church address the relational poverty."

Contact Debra Green for more details: debra.green@hopeintoaction.org.uk

Christian music festival set for Diss park

A Christian festival which aims to present a gospel outreach through music and the arts is set to be held in a public park in Diss in South Norfolk on Saturday August 30.

■ Organised by Diss Baptist Church, Life Fest's inaugural year was 2022, as organiser Ben Mansfield explains: "The vision was to present a gospel outreach music and arts festival locally. This came through two things – one was Rico Tice's Life Campaign in March of that year that the church was part of, and the other was our connection to Creation Fest in Cornwall – my wife and I had always been saying over the years how we would love to see a Christian music festival locally in Diss.

"Since then the festival has been growing, in scale and numbers, but the vision remains the same – for people to come for the fun, but stay for the Gospel. We know of three people who were impacted by the day and became Christians and are now baptized and discipled at church, and we are seeing people come to know God, or at least seeking him, and our church culture is changing and this is in part due to Life Fest."

Life Fest will run from 11am to 7.30pm on Diss Park, next to the Mere and is free. The line-up will include: Zach G Wilson (Reading), LetzFly (South Norfolk), Beth Merrill (Bedford), Gwil Davey (Norwich) and MC J Messy (Eye).

"Life Fest '24 had much more momentum than the previous two years," said Ben. "Being a relatively small town, much of the community know about it now. We had 1000 plus on the park passing through and around 300 who stayed for the whole day. We had good feedback, much of it from people who were not connected to church.

"This year we are looking to have a range of voices on the main stage and getting youth involved. Our heart is really for the youth of Diss and surrounding area and in many ways this festival is for them. Other churches will be involved and will be holding an arts and creativity marquee too.

"Diss Baptist Church is a Gospel-centred Church with an active children's and outreach ministry and so what we want is to present is an outward expression of local church," said Ben.

For more information email: lifefest-diss@gmail.com or Life Fest on Facebook.

Celebrate



Celebrating work of the Norfolk Christian community – pages 8 - 9

GOOD NEWS

FOR NORWICH & NORFOLK

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Your chance to enter the Norfolk Christian Communications Awards

Entries are now open for the Norfolk Christian Communications Awards 2025, launched as part of the 20th anniversary celebrations of the Network Norfolk website, with an awards night set for St John's Cathedral Narthex in Norwich on October 23.

The awards aim to showcase and encourage the best in Norfolk Christian communications and you can nominate yourself and your work or that of someone else.

"Our first event, held back in 2015 to mark the Network Norfolk tenth anniversary, was a big success and is still widely remembered," said website publisher Keith Morris.

"The 2025 awards are wider than just digital communications and include different types of content and the people who produce it. Entry is open to all who are a part of the Norfolk Christian community and the finalists will be invited to a special awards evening.

"We have a new set of categories to cover both digital and non-digital means of communication including websites, social media, best newsletter, digital audio and video content, pictures and a special Christian Communicator award, named after pioneer Peter Barnes who helped to launch the Good News for Norwich newspaper back in 1998 and who died last summer.

"The winners will be decided by expert judges and with a public vote for some categories and all finalists and sponsors will be invited along to the awards night date of Thursday October 23," said Keith.

The evening will include a canape and drinks reception, sponsors' exhibition and a formal awards section with the Bishop of Norwich, the Rt Rev Graham Usher as special guest speaker and former Radio Norfolk presenter Tony Mallion as compere.

Nominations/entries open on July 1 and close at 5pm on Friday August 29.

Awards sponsors are: YMCA Norfolk, the Diocese of Norwich, Hubb Church, Audio Electronic Design, St John's Cathedral and photographer Gareth Gabriel.

Award categories

■ **Best church website - the Bishop of Norwich Award**
Sponsored by the **Diocese of Norwich**
Criteria: Any size of Norfolk church. Good engagement, design and useability, regularly updated.

■ **Best organisation website**
Sponsored by **Hubb Church**
Criteria: Christian organisation based in Norfolk or with dedicated Norfolk section. Good engagement, design and useability, regularly updated.

■ **Best use of social media**
Sponsored by **YMCA Norfolk**
Criteria: Can be any social media channel. Good audience engagement, accessible language, regular new content or a specific campaign/effective outreach to wider community by a Norfolk Christian content provider.

■ **Best Christian communicator - Peter Barnes Award**
Sponsored by **YMCA Norfolk**
Criteria: Effective and engaging communication of Christian faith, church or organisation etc, using digital, face-to-face, or print platforms. Norfolk-based.
Examples: communication officers or church communication champions, Network Norfolk contributors, church newsletter editors.

■ **Best newsletter – digital or print**
Sponsored by **YMCA Norfolk**
Criteria: Regular Norfolk Christian news updates online or print from churches, organisations or other groups/individuals.
Examples: online e-bulletins, printed parish magazines or newspapers.

■ **Best Digital Content – video or audio**
Sponsored by **Audio Electronic Design**
Criteria: Engaging, good production values, accessible, effective.
Examples: Podcasts, church live stream or video/audio series, personal testimony/stories.

■ **Best picture of "the church in action"**
Sponsored by **Network Norfolk**
Criteria: Pictures published online or in-print, showcasing part of the Norfolk Christian community in action.
Examples: News or event pictures – usually with people in them.

■ **To enter visit www.networknorfolk.co.uk**

Servant-hearted Norwich church

After 20 years leading Servant's Church in Norwich, Californian pastor John Brown is stepping down, leaving behind a vibrant, Bible-focused congregation and a newly developing model of shared leadership. **Keith Morris** reports.


Servant's Church Sunday worship at City Academy, Earlham.

The church, which recently celebrated its 20th anniversary, holds a 200-strong Sunday morning service at City Academy in Earlham and a smaller afternoon service at its administrative base, Hillcrest Chapel in Thorpe St Andrews.

Lay elder Thomas Abbott describes the church as "a conservative evangelical church with a California vibe but a strong focus on Bible teaching."

The story began two decades ago when John and Sarah Brown moved from Calvary Chapel in California to plant the church, part of a wider international movement.

"Calvary Chapel came out of the Jesus Movement — the same as Vineyard — but where Vineyard became more charismatic, Calvary Chapel focused on expository Bible teaching," Thomas explained. "We would consider ourselves cautiously charismatic."

Initially meeting in a house, the church quickly grew, moving to public meetings at Earlham Community Centre, and later into the large atrium of City Academy.

Today, around 200 worshippers gather each Sunday morning, representing some 50 nationalities — a diversity celebrated at monthly bring-and-share lunches, particularly popular among university students.

The church is strongly family-orientated, with 50–60 children attending Sunday School weekly. A network of home groups spreads across the city and surrounding areas, and Hillcrest Chapel hosts regular community events including Little Seeds playgroup, Youth group, snack-and-chat sessions, and men's and women's ministries.

Hillcrest Chapel, recently refurbished, contains the church offices, an 80-seat hall, a kitchen, meeting rooms, and facilities for youth and children's work.

A new leadership model

■ Two years ago, John and Sarah announced their plans to eventually move on. In response, the church began transitioning to a new leadership model based on a plurality of elders — both staff and lay — working as equals.

The first major test of this new structure came with the appointment of a staff elder, leading to the arrival of Mexican pastor Alex Vaca and his Welsh wife, Annie.

The couple met in Mexico, where Annie was teaching at a university. Alex, who had transitioned from Catholicism to evangelical Christianity, played a key role in Annie's journey to faith. They married but two years later, while Annie was pregnant, she was assaulted at gunpoint.

"In Mexico, violence is sadly common," said Alex. "But for Annie, it was shocking. She said she couldn't raise a family there."

The couple relocated to Wales, where their son was born shortly afterwards. Adjusting proved difficult for Alex, who spoke little English and longed to serve in Christian ministry. He supported the family through a series of jobs — selling ice cream and hot dogs, working as a waiter and barman, and later in finance. Meanwhile, he studied theology, earning a BA from Union School of Theology.

Graduating just as Covid lockdowns began, Alex worked online for Florida-based Ligonier Ministries, answering theological queries. When that role ended in late 2022, he struggled to find a ministry role locally, leading him to explore opportunities further afield.

"Most churches seemed to be looking for a superman who could do everything," Alex said. "Then I saw the name 'Servant's Church'. It sounded different — like a place where I'd work alongside a pastor (within a team of pastors) rather than on my own as a solo pastor."

Much to his surprise, Alex was invited to an interview but, meanwhile, a family crisis was developing back in Mexico when his brother was kidnapped by a drugs cartel.

"Usually that is it and they never return," said Alex. "We all started to pray, day after day and amazingly the cartel said they would return my brother to the house. They came to the house and took our cars, money, jewellery, everything and left my brother behind."

Two hours before his Norwich interview, Alex received the miraculous news. During the interview, when asked if he'd faced any recent challenges, he shared the story. The elders paused the interview to pray for them — a response that left a deep impression.

"I thought, 'This is the kind of church I want to work for,'" said Alex.

"Alex wasn't the obvious candidate at first," admitted Thomas. "But going through the process helped us all understand what plurality really means — sharing responsibility, taking decisions together."

"When it came to a decision, the elders one by one said that they wanted to go for Alex because we felt he would be better and more comfortable working as part of a team in a plural leadership rather than having one person leading everything."

That was summer 2023 and began the process of transition for the church, which now has four lay elders and Alex and John as staff elders.

The church is also formally stepping away from the Calvary Chapel network — not due to any disagreement, Thomas clarified, but because Calvary's leadership model of a single, senior pastor no longer aligns with Servant's direction toward collective leadership. However, they maintain an informal relationship and continue to uphold Calvary's style of expository teaching and cautious charismatic approach. Servant's Church also remains affiliated with the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (FIEC).


The Servant's Church elders, from left, Thomas Abbott, Josh Musson, Jonny Hall, Alex Vaca and Paul Dean.

Church hallmarks

■ Servant's Church is notable for several distinctives.

"We don't have formal membership," Thomas explained. "We have deep reverence for God's Word and worship, but there's a casual style — a bit of a Californian vibe – flip-flops and t-shirts are normal. But we take Scripture very seriously, teaching verse-by-verse in an expository style."

The church identifies as conservative evangelical: only men serve as elders, but women are active in leadership and ministry roles.

There are also plans to develop Hillcrest Chapel further. "We believe God has a plan for this building and this neighbourhood," said Alex. "We're praying for vision."

Conditions attached to the building's use require that all activities maintain a Gospel focus, with no alcohol permitted and a sacred atmosphere preserved.

What to expect on Sundays

■ Visitors on Sunday mornings can expect services centred firmly on Jesus and the Bible. Worship is lively but reverent, with an openness to the Holy Spirit's gifts — especially the gift of love for one another.

A hallmark of Servant's Church is the mid-service break. After worship and a kids' segment, there's a 15-minute pause for tea, coffee, conversation and ministry.

"We disciple and pastor one another — everyone is a minister," said Alex.

As John Brown prepares to move on, he leaves behind a thriving church community — one rooted in Scripture, committed to shared leadership, and ready for its next chapter.

www.servantschurch.org.uk

Church to celebrate 200 years

Attleborough Baptist Church is celebrating its 200th anniversary in September, an exciting milestone since a small band of people first met in 1819 for prayer at the home of local watch and clockmaker James Dawes. **Denise Gee** reports.

With numbers of the group growing, the church soon moved to a 20 by 10 foot barn where a selection of deacons and preachers from the surrounding area started preaching the gospel. On August 25, 1825, they officially formed Attleborough Baptist Church – the congregation made up of seven members, with two of them baptised on that day in a small pond nearby.

Expanding further, in 1932, a wealthy resident of Old Buckenham built a chapel with accommodation in the village for Joseph Green, a popular young preacher from Diss who walked from Diss to Old Buckenham on Saturdays and back on Tuesdays.

Green received offers to serve from both Old Buckenham and Attleborough, but felt called by the Lord to preach in Attleborough, so the wealthy benefactor went on to build the chapel in Hargham Road. This is where the church still meets, albeit in the school that was next to the old chapel – the latter was demolished because of disrepair.

September celebrations

■ For the celebration weekend in September the church is planning the following:

Friday 12: A movie quiz night for the public presented by Andy Godfrey, a well-respected preacher and film critic. Andy will be discussing a selection of hit films through a Christian lens.

Sunday 14: A special service, including previous members and pastors, and leaders of other churches in the community.

Activities are not confined to the celebration weekend or 2025. Women and men's ministries are up and running to reach out to the community and the church is planning to present an external Alpha course, having done internal training. It also plans to stage an evangelistic outreach event with a renowned speaker, potentially in 2026.



Attleborough Baptist church today and (inset) back in 1925.



"We are very excited about what God is doing in our town and in our own church," says Pastor Rob Gee, who joined the congregation in 2023.

"Numbers are increasing steadily and we are planning new events and new outreaches for the months ahead. This year we are very aware and very humbled to realise how we stand upon the shoulders of numerous faithful believers who, over 200 years, have planted and watered the seed of God's Word in this place and we thank God for granting us the privilege of continuing this work. We're keen to connect with churches in our area and across the county in efforts to spread the gospel to the many in our communities who are searching for the truth."

If you are keen to attend or to take part, please contact Rob at pastor@attleborough.church or tel: 07714 720078. The church would also be grateful for any information about the church from any of its previous members.

Web: www.attleborough.church



Healthcare chaplain brings comfort in life's final chapter

An understanding of both physical and spiritual wellbeing is key to Helen Garrard's role as both an ordained minister and a registered nurse, working as chaplain at Priscilla Bacon Lodge in Norwich. **Helen Baldry** reports.



Norfolk healthcare trust lead chaplain Rev Helen Garrard.

Helen's calling into ministry emerged out of her nursing. She was a lay reader in the church for a long time before she discerned a calling to ordained ministry. Helen draws on her understanding of both physical and spiritual wellbeing in her role as chaplain.

Chaplaincy is part of the NHS provision and is for people of all faiths and none. Helen says the most important thing is to care for people sensitively and appropriately.

> ***"There are parts that actually come to life when we are drawing close to the end of our lives."***

"The majority of people I support in chaplaincy don't really have an identified faith or belief. Many people acknowledge that there is something beyond them and, whilst not aligning themselves with any particular faith or belief, are keen to explore the impact of this as physical health changes."

Helen's personal faith gives her the ability to sit alongside people in all sorts of distress and need. "Sometimes people look to you with questions such as; what happens beyond this life? What's it all about; Why is this happening to me? You then draw upon your rootedness in faith and tradition as a basis to support their exploration."

Priscilla Bacon Lodge is a hospice in Norwich offering specialist palliative care services. The modern building is owned and maintained by the Priscilla Bacon Lodge charity, which funds some additional services such as music therapy, complimentary therapy, arts therapy and a cafe from within the hospice.

Each room has a door connecting to the garden, and patients find great joy in watching the flowers come and go and to see the birds swooping over the field. Helen said: "There's a lot of joy just in the moment recognising that these are precious times."

Joy is something you'd think would be in short supply in a palliative care hospice. Helen said, "The joy comes from being able to support people in living their life as well as they can and completing it as well as they can. It's in listening to what matters to them and connecting with the person beyond the illness. There are parts of life, and of us, that are not diminished by illness. There are parts that actually come to life when we are drawing close to the end of our lives. Our spiritual awakening is much more vivid. People can be very free to pursue things like reconciliation of relationships."

There is a lot of strength in working with a close-knit team at the hospice, and part of Helen's role is to support the staff, whose regular experience of grief, and sadly sometimes upon the death of young patients, can be emotionally challenging.

Helen's work is to lead chaplaincy services for the whole of the healthcare trust. There are 12 community hospitals across Norfolk, plus patients living in the community. Helen leads and supervises the team of honorary chaplains and chaplaincy volunteers and describes them as 'incredible people'. She said, "I'm always interested in talking to people who have a vocational nudge towards hospital chaplaincy."

Originally from the North West of England, Helen and her husband, who is a parish priest in Rockland St Mary, have lived in Norfolk for 36 years. They enjoy traveling together, and Helen likes to cook and sew. She brings her creativity into her job, "The creativity is really important. Working creatively with people's stories and with your own faith to adapt liturgies and Bible stories can help to respond to a need."

Helen says that it's important for someone working in chaplaincy to be part of a church community and to keep their own faith nourished. Through her dedication, Helen demonstrates the powerful role of chaplaincy in supporting the wellbeing of both patients, their families and staff in palliative care.

For more details, please contact elisabeth.garrard2@nchc.nhs.uk or phone 01603 776633.



Annual Norfolk Bible conference

■ Word on the Wash will return to King's Lynn this October for its tenth anniversary event, entitled Building for the Lord, with teaching, worship, and a chance to connect with Christians from across the region.

Word on the Wash 2025 will be held on Saturday October 4, from 10am – 3.45pm, at the King's Centre, Wellesley Street, King's Lynn, PE30 1QD.

The speaker this year will be Adrian Reynolds, one of the National Directors of the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches. He will be looking at the book of Ezra under the title, Building for the Lord.



This year marks a particularly significant milestone with Word on the Wash having reached its tenth anniversary. Supported by the international Keswick Ministries, Christians from over forty churches across the area and further afield will be represented for this firmly established event.

Open to all, this free event is centred around worship, teaching from guest speakers, and a chance for fellowship.

There are two more pre-conference prayer meetings leading up to the event, on Zoom on Saturday July 26 and Saturday September 6.

For further details visit **wordonthewash.org.uk**

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Is there a Q

Have you heard the whispers that there is a quiet revival going on across England and Wales – and it has even reached Norfolk – according to a recent **Bible Society** report and local church leaders. **Keith Morris** reports.


The Diocese of East Anglia Ignite Youth Festival in Bury St Edmunds. Picture by RCDEA.

According to The Quiet Revival something amazing is happening, challenging long-held predictions about the future of Christianity in the twenty-first century.

Where once we saw aging congregations and a steady decline in attendance, we now see dramatic growth, led by the young. Where once we saw apathy or even hostility to Christianity and the Bible we see increased openness, especially among the young.

You may have heard the rumblings and rumours emerging over the past few years, you may even have noticed it in your own community, or it might have passed you by entirely – but this data shows that it is real, says the report.

For the first time, this is not just anecdote, but is demonstrated in the results of a large, robust and nationally representative population study that has tracked the religious attitudes and behaviours of England and Wales from 2018 up to 2024.

Paul Williams Chief Executive Officer, Bible Society, said: "We found that the Church is in a period of rapid growth, driven by young adults and in particular young men. Along with this, the Church demonstrates greater ethnic diversity than ever before.

"Both within and outside the Church, young adults are more spiritually engaged than any other living generation, with Bible reading and belief in God on the rise.

"But we also see that active engagement with a church has a significant impact on the lives of attenders, with a high increase in mental and general life wellbeing – again particularly among young adults, a generation in the midst of a mental health crisis.

"It is also changing communities, with churchgoers more likely to feel a connection to their local area and get involved in social engagement activities. Challenges remain for the Church and civic society in responding to this Quiet Revival, but its reality can no longer be denied."

Co-author of The Quiet Revival Dr Rhiannon McAleer said: "These are striking findings that completely reverse the widely held assumption that the Church in England and Wales is in terminal decline.

"While some traditional denomina-



Sam Cousins, associate pastor at Proclaimers in Norwich.

uiet Revival in Norfolk?



tions continue to face challenges, we've seen significant, broad-based growth among most expressions of Church – particularly in Roman Catholicism and Pentecostalism. There are now over two million more people attending church than there were six years ago."

Quiet Revival in Norfolk

■ Local church leaders in Norwich report that they are seeing this effect, particularly among the young, here too.

Sam Cousins, associate pastor at Proclaimers in Norwich, said: "In our church, predominantly around the 18 to 25 year olds, we are seeing a real increase in hunger for the things of God, people bringing their friends to church and also to go out on the streets and evangelise to random strangers or people they sit next to on the bus. There is a boldness and courage which I have not seen before.

"I do feel that this is a genuine move of God amongst a generation rather than something that has been manufactured or hyped and is among people with no church background.

"There is a desire for Christ, particularly among university students and we, as the church, need to be ready for that as people will be looking for something more.

"They are not here for performance or hype. Rather community is important but is not enough. There is an authentic hunger for an encounter with God and they are bringing their friends along," said Sam.

Nick Blanch, senior leader at British Youth for Christ, based in Norwich, said: "We are hearing loads of anecdotal stories of young people simply turning up at church with no Christian background and coming hungry, interested and wanting to know more.

"A young person who comes along to my lunch time group at a Norwich high school, with no Christian background, just decided that she wanted to go to church and she went and recently got baptized.

"Another local church told me that they had a young person, with no Christian background at all, just turned up and wanted to know how to read the Bible and trust in Jesus,.

"These are not isolated cases but we are hearing them time and time again."

When asked why he thinks this is happening now, Nick said: "Atheism has failed to deliver and left a massive vacuum and people are feeling empty. Young people are reacting against this. It is the same reason that people head towards social influencer Andrew Tait; they are looking for stronger guidance and purpose.

"The whole gender debate has left people so confused that you will find people saying this is crazy and nonsense and I need something more stable than that," said Nick.

According to the Quiet Revival report some 41% of churchgoers aged 18-34 are now Catholic – the largest such denominational group and only 20% are Anglican (down from 30% in 2018).

The Catholic Diocese of East Anglia is seeing the effects with more young people than ever (around 350) attending the Ignite Festival in early May said Hamish MacQueen, director of youth services.

"There is a thriving teenage youth group at St John's Cathedral of up to 40 people meeting each week, including a number of non-churched youngsters, who have come along with friends. They say they like the talks, which are quite evangelistic," said Hamish.

The national Flame event at Wembley Arena in March saw 10,000 young people listening to Bear Grylls and Cardinal Vincent Nichols, and over 150 from East Anglia attended – more than ever and selling out in record time.

"The experience was so uplifting," said Simone, 18, from Norwich. "It was amazing to be surrounded by so many young people who share the same faith. I feel so much more connected to the Church now, and I'm inspired to live out my faith in a more meaningful way."

Responding to the Quiet Revival reports, Hamish said: "I have been seeing it before I knew that others had also. I think that many young people are a bit disillusioned with the state of the world around them, with politics, social media and over wokeness. They want something solid and substantial. Ultimately, It's the work of the Holy Spirit."

Visit: www.rcdea.org.uk

Reliable survey

■ The 2018 sample surveyed 19,101 adults in England and Wales, while the 2024 sample surveyed 13,146 adults. Both samples therefore give a 1% margin of error at a 99% confidence level, meaning they are highly reliable. The surveys were conducted through YouGov's online panel.

Find out more and download the full report at: www.biblesociety.org.uk/research/quiet-revival

Key report findings

The growing church

■ Church attendance in England and Wales is on the rise. This represents a startling change to decades-long trends and presumptions, with the most dramatic increase seen among young people, particularly young men.

In 2018, just 4% of 18–24-year-olds said they attended church at least monthly. Today this has risen to 16%, with young men increasing from 4% to 21%, and young women from 3% to 12%. This is now the second most likely age group to attend church regularly.

Overall, churchgoing Christians now make up 12% of the population, up from 8% in 2018. In numerical terms, that's growth from 3.7m in 2018 to 5.8m in 2024 – an increase of 56%.

The changing church

■ In addition to absolute growth in churchgoing, including among the white population, the Church in England and Wales is also becoming more diverse. Just under 1 in 5 churchgoers (19%) are from an ethnic minority, but among 18–54-year-olds this rises to 1 in 3 (32%). At the same time Catholicism has risen sharply and Pentecostalism has become the third biggest Christian tradition, with the share of Anglicans churchgoers dropping steadily.

Practice matters

■ At the same time, those who don't engage in practices such as churchgoing or Bible reading are less likely than ever to identify themselves as Christian. Christianity increasingly involves an active commitment rather than a passive cultural label.

The spiritual generation

■ The young people in the sample don't just go to church more, they show above-average levels of warmth to spirituality, the Church and spiritual practice. This group of 18–24-year-olds are the most likely to pray regularly, with 40% saying they pray at least monthly. 51% have engaged with a spiritual practice over the past six months, compared to 42% of those older than them.

They are also the group most interested in learning more about the Bible, with 37% of 18–24s saying they are curious to discover more about it. 35% of 18–24-year olds say there is 'definitely a God/gods or higher power'.

Churchgoing and wellbeing

■ With much of the population, in particular young people, struggling with mental health, loneliness and a loss of meaning in life, Church appears to be offering an answer. We found that churchgoers are more likely than non-churchgoers to report higher life satisfaction and a greater feeling of connection to their community than non-churchgoers. They are also less likely to report frequently feeling anxious or depressed – particularly young women.

63% of 18–34-year-old churchgoers say they feel close to people in their local area, compared to 25% of non-churchgoers.

Socially engaged congregations

■ This is not solely about personal development, however, and we also see that churchgoers are more likely to actively participate in activities aimed at benefitting the community around them. Churchgoers are more likely to volunteer, donate to foodbanks and give to charitable causes, demonstrating the positive effect of Christian faith on their lives – and the impact that a rise in churchgoing can have on society as a whole.

79% of churchgoers agree it's important to them to try to make a difference in the world.

Openness and opportunity

■ The astonishing growth in churchgoing is matched by an openness to Christianity and the Bible: 31% of non-churchgoers say they would attend church if invited by a friend or family member, rising to 34% among 18–24-year-olds. 56% of non-churchgoers would be happy for a Christian friend to pray for them.

Where do you find refuge?

Norwich primary school teacher **Ruth Lilley** explains where she finds peace and joy amidst the hectic busy-ness of daily life.

■ Sitting here in the sun and enjoying the gentle breeze and birds chatting away to each other feels very far away from the busy day I've just had.

However, it is moments like these that fuel me through the hectic days, along with the chaos and the pile of Post-it notes that seems to grow rather than decline, no matter how much I cross things off! They fuel me through the painful moments and the moments that knock me off the path.

I'm not unhappy with my lot – far from it. I will often count my blessings which come in many shapes and sizes! I do wonder though, if I didn't take these moments, or if I was not purposeful about finding peace, whether the chaos and the struggles would overwhelm me to the point of not finding the strength to lift my gaze.

What enables me to lift my gaze? The imprint that with every sun comes a new day and therefore hope. There have been so many new days, new moments even, where I have found strength to breathe deep and begin again.

But also, it is the knowledge that I am loved and protected – Psalm 5:11 says:

"But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them sing joyful praises forever.

Spread your protection over them, that all who love your name may be filled with joy."

These verses remind me that, in all moments, I can find refuge in God's strong hands. I can choose joy because I am covered by an outrageous love.

So, whether the moment brings peace or pain. Whether the moment brings calm or chaos, within me there is ability to remain steadfast. There is the ability to hold on to what I know is true, because time and time again, that is what brings me through to the next moment. I might falter, I might stumble, yet I can reset and refocus knowing I am loved and protected… in all moments.

Celebrate Norwich & Norfolk

Highlighting the work of the Norwich & Norfolk Christian community

Chaplaincy offers support for people leaving prison



Community Chaplaincy Norfolk (CCN) is a Christian charity which provides Volunteer Mentors for prison leavers of all faiths and none, supporting them to rebuild their lives after prison, as its team explains.

The Client Journey

■ Mentors contact Clients while they are still in prison; to build up a relationship and identify the kind of support they need to achieve their goals.

On release we try to meet each client at the gate and accompany them to all the appointments they have. This is followed by regular meetings with their mentor to discuss progress and work through any challenges and is appreciated by the clients:

"This has been one of the best things I've found to help with rehabilitation…I don't think I would have made it on my own if I'm honest."

"They helped me with trying to overcome my social anxiety on public transport."

"Since I have left prison they have helped me build a relationship with my kids."

Volunteer Mentors

■ Training course includes the criminal justice system, communication skills, boundaries, personal safety, anti-corruption, goal setting, practicalities, record keeping, safeguarding and trauma informed mentoring. This is followed by regular support and training. Could you become a Mentor with CCN?

Donate

■ Maybe you haven't got the time to be a mentor, but would like to support us, please set up a regular or one-off donation via our website or using the QR code. £10 pays for a prison leaver to meet their mentor for a coffee, £30 covers a mentor's travel expenses for a month, £50 enables us to train a new volunteer mentor.

Could your church or group adopt us as charity of the month once a year?

Could your business sponsor us?

Would you be interested in the 'Caring for Prison Leaver Training' we could offer your group or employees?

Presentations

■ Would you like us to come and present to a group you are involved with? How we work and an insight into the criminal justice system. We can often bring along a mentor and/or client to share their experience and journey too.

For more information

■ Website: www.norfolkchaplaincy.org.uk
Facebook: Community Chaplaincy Norfolk
Email: info@norfolkchaplaincy.org.uk
Phone: 07882 288348

If you would like Celebrate Norfolk to highlight the work of your Christian group or organisation, email Keith at celebrate@networknorwich.co.uk to find out more

Operation Christmas Child gives hope to hurting people

Operation Christmas Child is a project of Samaritan's Purse, an international non-denominational evangelical Christian organisation, with a team in East Anglia, providing spiritual and physical aid to hurting people around the world. East of England Regional Manager **Trish Ellse** explains how your church can get involved.

For many children, an Operation Christmas Child shoebox is often the very first gift they receive. Each shoebox you fill with toys, accessories, hygiene items and school supplies enables local ministry partners in receiving countries to reach out in love to boys and girls in their community with the joy of a shoebox gift and the Good News of the Gospel. From Central Asia, Eastern Europe, Africa and to the ends of the earth, the gifts you pack will delight precious children and offer a lasting hope that will change lives and transform communities.

"The OCC ministry… supports the values and mission of who we are… spreading the word of Jesus and guiding people towards a deeper connection with God." Beacon Community Church, Bacton

■ **How to get involved:**

You're only four easy steps away from sharing God's love with children in need:

■ Order your resources through our website samaritanspurse.org.uk/occ

■ Appoint someone to coordinate Operation Christmas Child in your church and start promoting to your congregation.

■ Have fun packing shoeboxes and pray for the children who will receive your gifts.

■ Drop off your shoeboxes during National Collection Week, 10-17 November 2025

Not able to pack a physical box? Build a shoebox online through our website in minutes and set a target to encourage your church to pack together and watch the tracker grow.

Want to share the Good News of the Gospel in your community?

Hosting a packing party is a great way to invite your neighbours, friends, family or school into the life of your church. Just follow the steps to plan your event on our website samaritanspurse.org.uk/host-a-packing-party

"We have a packing party each year that we invite members of our community to… it is an expression and model of generosity to others." Oak Grove Community Church, Norwich.

■ **The Gospel:** We believe in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We're committed to seeing this Gospel shared in the form of both words (that can change spiritual circumstances) and acts of mercy (that can change physical circumstances).

■ **The Local Church:** Where possible we work through local churches – seeing them as God's chosen instrument to bring hope to a hurting world.

■ **Partnership:** We encourage others to join us in being part of God's global mission. We know that each individual can bring their own talents, gifts, and unique contribution – no matter how small – to this great work we have been called.

■ **Norfolk contacts:** Mark & Debra Watkins: markdebrawatkinsocc@yahoo.com



Bowthorpe Road Methodist in Norwich.

It's good news for everyone in Norfolk

Good News for Everyone – formerly the Gideons – provide God's word to all, and regularly supply hospitals, prisons, schools, hotels, care homes and funeral directors – all free of charge.


Jane and Geoff Mann with Claire Gunn (right).

■ In the last eight months they have supplied 1,121 Bibles and Hope magazines for prisoners to HMP Norwich, Wayland & Bure. One of the Chaplains said: "We have more people wanting to come to our services than we can facilitate. We really need more Christian Volunteer Chaplains. We are praying that Christian leaders in the community may be stirred to give a morning or a day to minister. God is at work in our prisons; four prisoners gave their lives to Jesus this last week! Please pray for us and ask the Lord to send more workers into the field."

Branches are always in need of more 'Members' and 'Friends' and are appealing to people inspired by the mission of the Good News for Everyone to get involved.

Claire Gunn, Norwich Branch Chair, said: "Each branch must raise the funds for the scriptures they give away and the Norwich Branch may have to put a hold on ordering soon. On average the cost to the Norwich Branch for Bibles and other resources has been roughly £1,000 a month and our regular donations are only about £150. We have to rely on one off donations to keep going and are now overspent with head office by £3,000 - this cannot continue."

Could you help put God's word into people's hands by becoming a 'Friend' and donating on a monthly basis? If lots of people donate a little a month, they will be able to continue and not turn requests away.

Another way people can help is to ask their church if they could take an offering for the Norwich Branch, or sponsor the Bibles given out in their local schools or other establishments."

To find out more, please go to www.goodnewsuk.com ring 01455 554 241 or contact info@goodnewsuk.com and ask to be put in contact with Claire Gunn – Norwich Branch.

Charity is a place for new beginnings

The House of Genesis is a Norwich charity, which offers supported accommodation to homeless men, many of whom are ex-offenders.

■ Val Dodsworth founded the charity in December 2000 in her home. With very little in the way of initial resources other than faith and determination she, helped by an ex-offender, combined their skills and life experiences to begin the work that has grown into The House of Genesis – a place to make a new start.

Since that time the charity has grown steadily and now uses five properties on the east side of Norwich, with five staff offering supported accommodation for up to 20 men.

Genesis offers a comfortable and friendly place to call home, giving men the opportunity to become re-established in the life of the community.

Chair of trustees, Alan Lusher, said: "We offer help with everyday things, like getting registered with a doctor and a dentist, help with form filling and applying for benefits. We link up with many local agencies for services like counselling, help with addictions, establishing family contact, dealing with debts, managing finances and the many other things that crop up for our residents from day-to-day. We offer all the support we can to enable the men to move on to their own accommodation."

"Genesis was founded by Christians with the purpose of providing not only a home for those without one, but also to express in our daily living the genuine care and concern that we believe God has for every individual. A verse from the Bible that has been an inspiration to us from the beginning is 'Remember to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have entertained angels without knowing it' (Hebrews 13:2).

"There is no expectation that any resident should be a Christian although should a resident express an interest in the faith, we have a chaplain who will help and guide them," said Alan. "We believe that each man who comes to us is a unique individual, made in the image of God and has the potential to live a successful and fulfilling life. It's then our job to help him to find the best within himself and to encourage him to take that way forward in his life."

You can read more about the charity on its website: www.thehouseofgenesis.org

"Remember to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have entertained angels without knowing it" Hebrews 13 v 2



Offering a regular chance for prayer in Norwich

Norwich Healing Rooms is a place where anyone can go to for prayer, no matter what the need, whether physical, emotional or spiritual.

■ It opened in September 2013 and is currently operating from New Hope Christian Centre on Martineau Lane in Norwich.

The Norwich Healing Rooms is part of The International Association of Healing Rooms, with over 2,000 centres worldwide. The ministry has a close connection with Norfolk Healing Rooms, and has shared training sessions with them.

Norwich Healing Rooms are available every Thursday from 7.30pm at New Hope Christian Centre, Martineau Lane, Norwich, NR1 2HX. They also meet at St Stephens Church next to Marks & Spencer on the second Saturday of each month from 12.30 - 2pm. Tel: 07508 811020 or 07951 567684. It is completely free of charge.



Charles and Vivien Strafford are Directors of Norwich Healing Rooms. They explain: "Our team is dedicated to seeing the same healings which took place in the Bible take place today, because Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever."

"The impact on the people that come to visit us is very powerful. We are the hands and feet of Jesus and our commission is to tell others about the Good News of the gospel, pray for the sick in all areas of a person's life and see them healed in body mind and spirit. We are totally scriptural in all we do, led by the Holy Spirit.

"If you feel you have a calling to pray for the sick and would be committed to join our team on Thursday evenings. Please call us on the above numbers for a chat."

Healing Rooms were originally founded by John G Lake, who was known as 'God's Apostle to Africa'. He was born in Canada in 1870, and his family soon relocated to the United States, where he grew up. His healing and preaching ministry spanned the years 1898 until his death in 1935.

In 1908, he went to Africa, where his anointed miracle ministry resulted in what has been described as "the most extensive and powerful missionary movement in all Africa." On his return to America, he established a ministry in Spokane, Washington which resulted in no less than 100,000 reported miracles of healing within the space of five or six years.

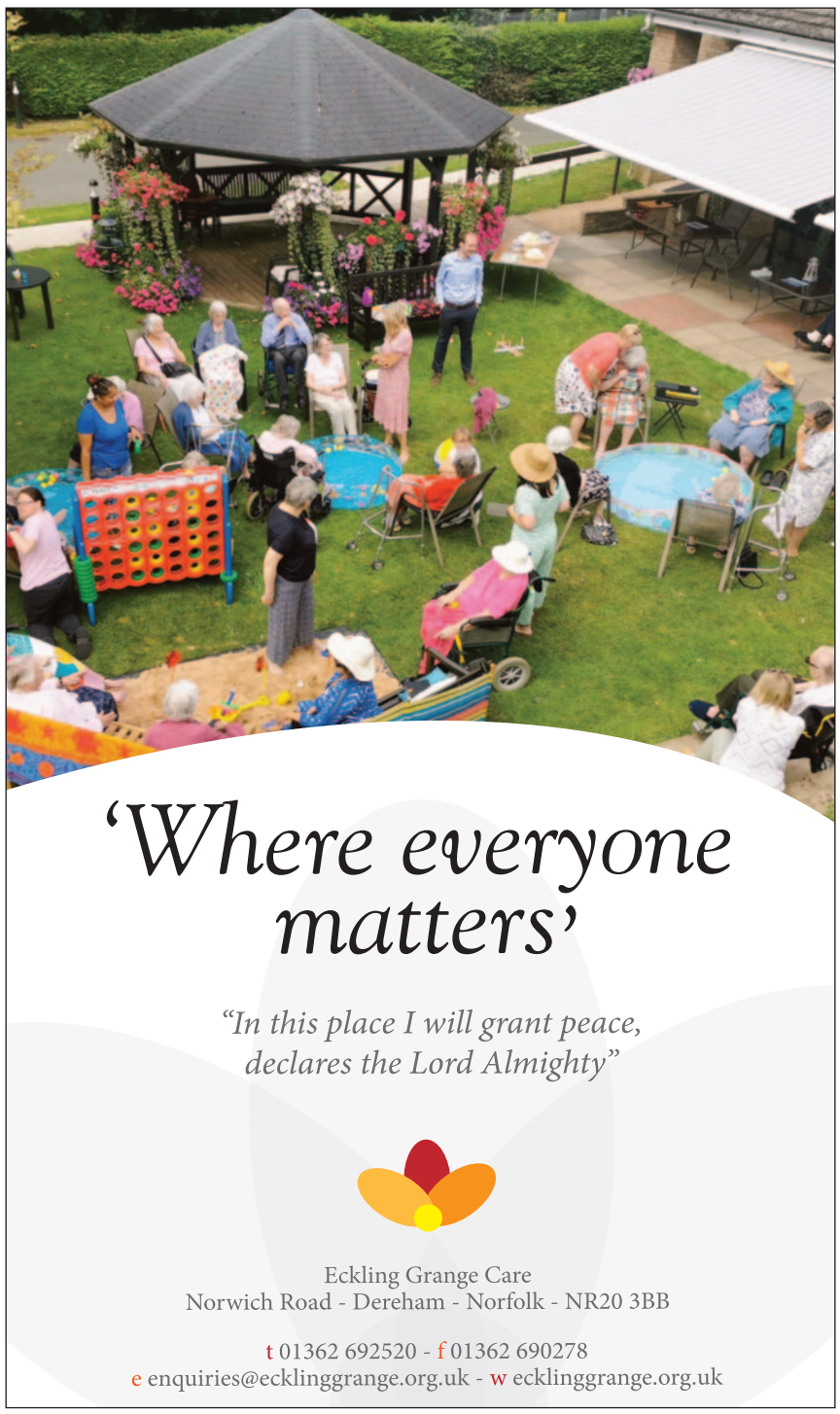
You can read more about Norwich Healing Rooms at: www.norwichhealingrooms.co.uk

Email: info@norwichhealingrooms.co.uk

Pictured above with Charles and Vivien Strafford are some of the team.

Retirement hom care with a Chri

Care and retirement homes in Norfolk, including **Eckling Grange, Corton House** and **Quebec Hall,** are providing loving care with a Christian ethos.



'Where everyone matters'

"In this place I will grant peace, declares the Lord Almighty"

Eckling Grange Care
Norwich Road - Dereham - Norfolk - NR20 3BB

t 01362 692520 - f 01362 690278
e enquiries@ecklinggrange.org.uk - w ecklinggrange.org.uk

Christian retirement home **Quebec Hall** at Dereham, in Mid Norfolk, has provided a home for retired Christians for 63 years, the management and staff aim to provide a secure, home-from-home atmosphere coupled with personal care and attention. Above all, they wish the home to be one in which the love of God is readily apparent from the care shown.

The Hall has 19 rooms and all are bright, airy and en-suite. The Hall has two large lounges, one of which features a balcony that affords good views of the gardens and beyond. The lounge on the ground floor is used extensively for the majority of the Hall's activities including the weekly services.

There are also 43 bungalows situated in the grounds of Quebec Hall. The self-contained bungalows are well suited to those who are seeking peace in their later years and who wish to maintain their independence.

For more information visit www.quebechall.co.uk or contact manager Mark Woodgett on 01362 692504 or via email at: info@quebechall.co.uk

Quebec Hall can be found at Quebec Road, Dereham, Norfolk NR19 2QY.

Excellent loving care and support is provided at **Corton House**, a not-for-profit care home situated in the heart of Norwich, enjoying the leafy surroundings of mature walled gardens, and with a variety of bright and comfortable communal rooms, all with wheelchair access.

Founded over 70 years ago on the Christian ethos of community and kindness, the home has fostered links with local churches over many years, and has been blessed by the Bishop of Lynn following a large-scale refurbishment. There are regular worship services for those who wish to participate, and the opportunity to receive Communion and pray with the dedicated chaplain, who has been officially licensed as the Chaplain of Corton House by the Diocese of Norwich.

Hailed as a pioneer in social care back in 1952, Corton House continues to stand for innovation today. One of the cornerstones of this is the home's progressive activities and wellbeing programme, offering something beyond the standard knitting and board games – although there is plenty of time for those too!

Corton House regularly partners with specialist arts and culture providers, and has strong community links, allowing plenty of opportunity to socialise and learn something new. Recent examples include British Sign Language taster lessons, clay sculpture-making inspired by local wildlife, and collaborative poetry writing with a local school.

There is no 'one size fits all' approach to care at Corton House; each resident is treated as an individual and supported to make their own choices and be as independent as they can be.

The best way to see what Corton House can offer and get a feel for its warm, caring atmosphere is to arrange a tour – just call 01603 620119 or email manager@cortonhouse.co.uk.

www.cortonhouse.co.uk

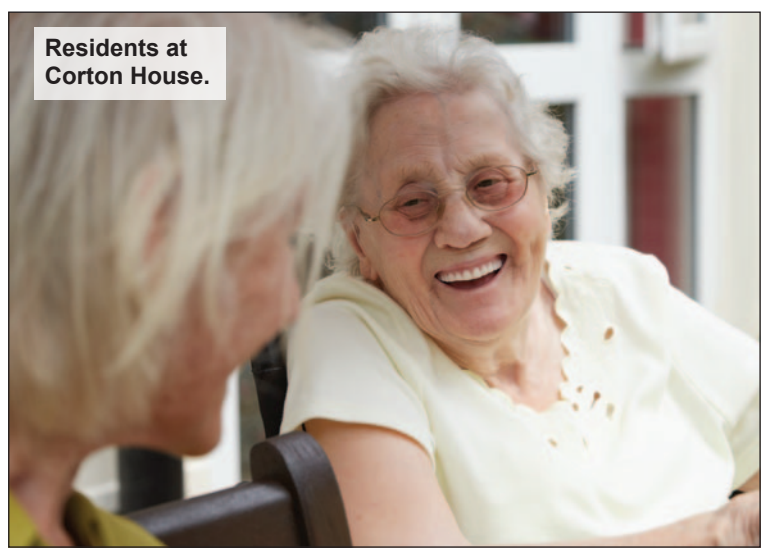
Eckling Grange is a Christian residential care home and sheltered housing community set in beautiful grounds on the edge of Dereham.

Founded in 1963 to care for returning Christian missionaries, the home has offered compassionate, professional care to many residents over the years.

Today, Eckling Grange continues to thrive, providing residential, dementia, day, and respite care in a warm and welcoming environment. Alongside the main care home are 54 well-appointed bungalows, offering independent living with support on hand whenever it's needed.

Spiritual well-being is central to life at Eckling Grange, and residents can take part in regular services, prayer groups and hymn singing. Two





Residents at Corton House.

Sponsored editorial

es provide stian ethos

Pastors support not only the residents but also their families and the dedicated team of over 100 staff.

There are many facilities on site, including a coffee shop and meeting place that seats 50. Meanwhile, a fully accessible 16-seater minibus helps residents enjoy regular outings to local attractions across Norfolk.



The residents Dining Club at Quebec Hall.

Whether you're looking for a caring residential setting or a peaceful bungalow community with spiritual depth and a strong sense of belonging, Eckling Grange offers a uniquely supportive environment where faith and care go hand in hand.

To find out more, call 01362 692520, email enquiries@ecklinggrange.org.uk, or visit www.ecklinggrange.org.uk

65th Anniversary
Open Day





and Service of Thanksgiving

★ Tea in the picturesque gardens or in the marquee
★ Tour the Hall...visit the Bungalows
★ Enjoy the Fellowship

Speaker: Sam Leinster

Saturday, 19th July at 3pm









Quebec Hall
Christian Home

For further information, please contact:
Mark Woodgett (Manager)
Quebec Hall Limited
Quebec Road, Dereham
Norfolk NR19 2QY
t 01362 692504
e info@quebechall.co.uk
w www.quebechall.co.uk

Upto 6,000 in modern slavery in East Anglia

There may be as many as 6,000 people trapped in modern slavery across East Anglia according to Norfolk Catholic activist **Simon John.**



Modern slavery in Britain is a growing crisis, with record numbers of victims identified in 2024, including many British nationals and children, prompting urgent awareness efforts and calls for action to combat exploitation," he said.

Recent statistics from the Home Office reveal that in 2024, a record 19,125 victims of modern slavery were referred into the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), the UK's system for protecting victims. This marks a significant increase from the 17,000 referrals recorded in 2023.

However, the actual number of people found in conditions of modern slavery was even higher. An additional 5,598 individuals were identified as victims but chose not to be referred into the NRM. This brings the total number of confirmed cases to 24,723 across Britain in 2024.

Alarmingly, British nationals made up the largest proportion of victims, accounting for approximately 23% of those identified. This highlights that modern slavery is not solely a migration issue. Even more distressing is the fact that nearly 6,000 of the victims were children.

Simon John, who is co-lead of the Diocese of East Anglia Initiative on Modern Slavery, has estimated that around 1,000 of these victims were identified within the diocese. "This is a shocking reality," he said, "but the number of people still trapped in slavery within our Diocese may be as high as 6,000."

Projections for the future paint a bleak picture. This year, there may be up to 200,000 enslaved individuals in Britain. If current trends continue, by 2037 this figure could reach one million.

In response to this growing crisis, awareness initiatives have been taking place across the Catholic Diocese. Throughout the spring, talks on modern slavery were delivered to Diocesan priests during Deanery meetings. These sessions included excerpts from the Vatican's 2019 document Pastoral Orientations on Human Trafficking, which provides guidance on combatting modern slavery from a Christian perspective.

"Pope Francis has consistently called upon people of goodwill to take action on this issue. He has urged the Church to actively seek out and support those trapped in modern slavery, reaffirming our moral responsibility to help the most vulnerable in society," said Simon.

When asked what can be done to tackle this issue, Simon explained: "Modern-day slaves are not hidden away. They are working among us, but their wages are often paid directly into their traffickers' bank accounts."

To help combat this injustice, the Diocese now has nearly 40 individuals in training to recognise the signs of modern slavery. However, many more are needed. Their efforts have already led to the identification and rescue of three victims within the Diocese.

Many victims are unable to report their condition due to fear, coercion, or lack of opportunity. As Christians, we have a duty to act. Jesus said: 'I was in prison and you visited me' – likewise, we are called to reach out to our suffering brothers and sisters.

The police, local authorities, and the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA) have urged the public to be vigilant. We are asked to be their eyes and ears, learning to spot the signs and reporting concerns safely and anonymously.

If you suspect someone is a victim of modern slavery, please call the Modern Slavery Helpline on 08000 121 700.

"By working together, we can ensure that the enslaved people in East Anglia are found and freed. Please consider joining this vital mission," said Simon.

More details at **rcdea.org.uk**

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Gill's life of faith and gratitude

Despite a difficult relationship with her grandmother, two sons born with congenital problems and current health challenges, Norwich Christian Gill Baxter lives out a life of faith and gratitude. **Helen Baldry** reports.



A life of faith - Gill Baxter.

Born in Bedford the year after the second world war ended, Gill didn't enjoy a particularly happy childhood. Not because of her parents, who were very kind towards Gill and her sister, but because of sustained cruel treatment from her grandmother whom the family lived with.

Gill said, "She was a very domineering person and had favourites – and I certainly wasn't her favourite! The youngest one was always her favourite. That put a wedge between me and my sister for quite some time."

Gill was sent to Sunday school, she suspects so that her parents could get some peace and quiet! She said, "My parents were not church-goers but Sunday school anniversaries were big events. My sister and I had identical new dresses for the occasion. My mother came and God must have touched her heart and after that she decided to go to the morning services regularly and took me and my sister along with her. One time shortly after that I remember she went forward in response to an appeal and became a Christian. After a few months she was baptised. I can still remember how worried I was that she would drown and my grandmother would have to look after us!"

One of the American evangelist Billy Graham's crusades was broadcast to one of the big churches in Bedford. Gill said, "I was 14 or 15 at the time. My mother dragged me and my sister along to one of the meetings – most reluctantly as far as I was concerned. As I heard the gospel preached and the hymns sung God spoke to me, and I knew I had to go forward at the appeal. My sister responded as well. When I got to the front I found I was standing next to my best friend from school. We are still close friends to this day. A few months later all three of us were baptised together."

Gill, whose maiden name was Nurse, left school at 17 to work with disabled teenagers. She then started her nursing training in London – and found it rather embarrassing to be known as 'Nurse Nurse'. However, Gill was frequently called upon to support her mother who had several mental breakdowns, largely due to caring for Gill's grandmother. Gill eventually had to abandon her nursing training.

Resentment had built up in Gill's mind due to her difficult relationship with her grandmother. She said, "I knew that God was asking me to forgive her for all the hurtful things she'd said to me over the years. I didn't even know how to begin the process. It took a long time. Forgiveness is a choice you have to make. Every time feelings of hurt rose up again, I said to the Lord 'I choose to forgive'".

Gradually the healing process started, and Gill was able to look at things from her grandmother's point of view as well; she had lost a brother in the war. Gill also learned from her sister that it wasn't easy being the favourite either. Gill grew up feeling that others were loved more than she was, but eventually understood how much God loved her. She said, "God has forgiven me far more than he was asking me to forgive my grandmother for."

Gill met her husband Terry at Chiswick Baptist Church and they have been married for 57 years, 46 of them in Norwich, which Gill describes as "the best place I have ever lived". Both their sons were born with congenital physical problems. Stephen had a hole in his heart which didn't close up naturally as the medical team had hoped, so he had open heart surgery at the age of three. Dave was born with some fingers and toes missing.

Now, Gill and Terry have to live apart; since Gill's Parkinsons got worse, she lives in a care home. While they wouldn't choose to live apart, Gill and Terry make the best of the situation. They pray together on the phone and see each other most days.

Members of the couple's church – Norwich Central Baptist Church – regularly play worship music at the care home and Terry, who used to be chaplain at Norwich prison, leads services. Despite these challenges, Gill describes her life now as a blessing. She said: "I look back over my life and know that I have been loved with an everlasting love. I've let him down many times but God has never let me down."

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