GOOD NEWS

FOR NORWICH & NORFOLK

Summer 2026: FREE

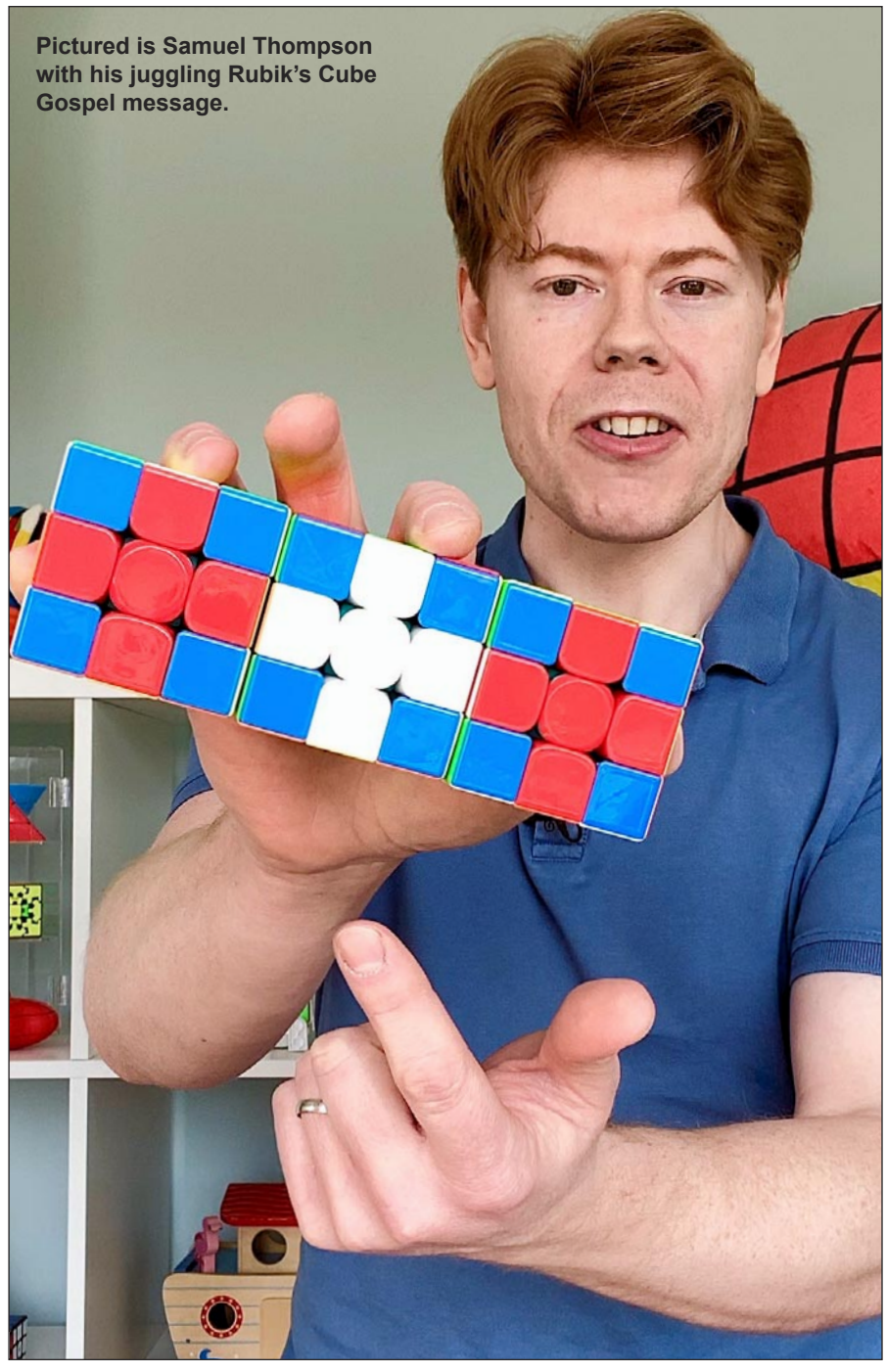
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Norwich father spreads Gospel through juggling

Christian Rubik's Cube juggler **Samuel Thompson**, from Norwich, has used the popular toy to tell the story of his own faith, the Gospel and Jesus on the cross. **Keith Morris** reports.



Pictured is Samuel Thompson with his juggling Rubik's Cube Gospel message.

Father-of-five, Samuel, who is part of Servants Church in Norwich, has just successfully achieved one of the rarest feats in the twisty-puzzle community: solving three Rubik's Cubes simultaneously while keeping them in a continuous juggling cascade.

He recorded it live on his YouTube channel, in what he says is one of the slowest-ever such feats, which took an incredible 26 minutes of absolute concentration.

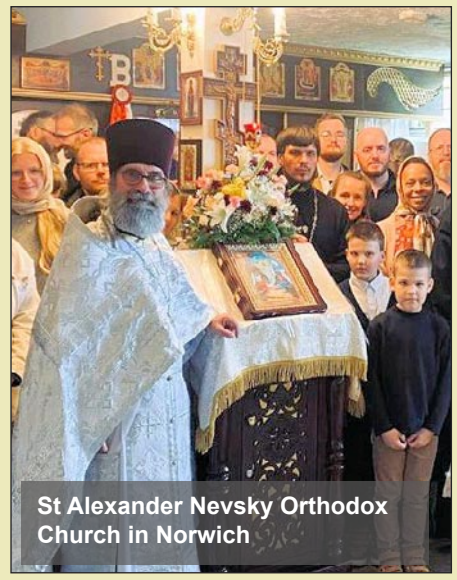
Samuel, who works as a finance director, said: "The channel documents the full journey, in which I'm committing to sharing everything I learn along the way, including an upcoming 10-step masterclass for those wanting to learn the skill from scratch as I have.

"I am driven by three main reasons. Firstly my faith – part of my closing reflection in the video explains the connection – 'whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God'. Cube juggling falls squarely in the camp of 'whatever you do' in my view. Secondly, to inspire my children and others – I want to show them that with consistency, you can conquer goals that seem utterly impossible at first glance. And finally, just for pure fun – I find it a brilliant and fun challenge.

"Globally, the speedcubing and juggling niche is overwhelmingly dominated by children and teenagers who practice for hours a day. Very few people in history have ever successfully recorded a full, start-to-finish three-cube juggle solve, and especially one which took so long."

Samuel has used another YouTube video to tell the story of Jesus on the cross.

"In an Easter reflection I shared earlier this year, I linked the solving of the iconic 'Cross' – the first step in solving the Rubik's Cube – with the story of the three crosses at Jesus' crucifixion. Visit: www.youtube.com/@CubeJuggling



St Alexander Nevsky Orthodox Church in Norwich

Norwich church doubles in size

Less than ten years since its launch, a Norwich church has now received approval to double the size of its building to accommodate a growing congregation.

■ The Russian Orthodox St Alexander Nevsky Church on Oak Street in Norwich has been given the go-ahead to add a second storey to its building by city planners.

The church, which is dedicated to a Russian prince who lived during the 1200s, has around 60 parishioners, and will also be building a domed tower as part of its plans.

Father Spasimir Ivanov, the priest of the church, says all the money needed to build the tower will come from donations.

He told the EDP: "We don't know yet the cost to build the church. We will first have to design a detailed plan of the building and then estimate the cost."

Following Norwich City Council's approval, leaders can now calculate the costs of the extension and donation collections can get under way.

Several parishioners of the church supported the plans by writing to City Hall shortly after the designs were revealed.

One person said: "The parish has grown significantly in the last few years and is a vibrant and diverse community. As well as a broad mix of Eastern European immigrants and refugees, there has also been an influx of British people, particularly men – me being one of them – who have found a sense of belonging and purpose through the community."

The Russian Orthodox church is the only one of its kind in the city with another one located near Bungay.

The Norwich church only held its first-ever service on September 10, 2016, after an internet appeal raised the £55,000 needed to adapt the building for church use.

www.norwichorthodoxchurch.org.uk/en

New West Norfolk pilgrimage route is launched

■ A 29-mile Walsingham Way pilgrimage route has been officially opened after years of development with a launch celebration at King's Lynn Minster.

The Walsingham Way Group launched a new pilgrimage route from King's Lynn to Walsingham on Saturday June 6, outside King's Lynn Minster.

The Mayor of King's Lynn opened the route by cutting a ribbon. Canon Mark Dimond from the Minster, and RC Canon Peter Rollings from the Our Lady of the Annunciation, introduced the event and led prayers. Local historian Dr Paul Richards gave a talk on the local history of pilgrimage and Senior Tourism Officer Phil Eke presented the practical aspects of the route. The route looks to serve those motivated by religion, history, or a connection to nature.

Canon Mark Dimond said: "It is a route designed for those wishing to re-enact the route taken by Hanseatic and English pilgrims in the medieval period, for those who wish to visit the historic sights like the Norman Castle Rising Castle or the angel-roofed St Mary's, South Creake, or simply those who wish to take exercise for improving their mental health."

The King's Lynn leg is the second part of the Walsingham Way with the Norwich to Walsingham Way already established.

This new route, setting off from King's Lynn Minster, travels through the Woottons, Castle Rising, Sandringham, Anmer, Great Bircham, South Creake, North Barsham, before reaching Walsingham. The route is 29 miles long with Great Bircham halfway.

Visit: explorewestnorfolk.co.uk

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FOR NORWICH & NORFOLK

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■ **Editor and designer: Keith Morris**
■ **Writers: Helen Baldry, Tony Rothe, Peter Bending**
■ **Advertising: Helen Baldry 07925 371732**
■ **Distribution: Alan Lusher 07743 926884**

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Heart-changing moment for Norwich professor

On a winter's morning in 2019, a nervous and slightly anxious man slipped into the back of St Catherine's Church in Mile Cross, Norwich. For UEA Professor of Faith and Global Politics **Lee Marsden**, it proved to be a heart-changing moment.


Norwich author Lee Marsden.

A diminutive female preacher, head barely reaching over the top of the lectern, started talking about the return of the prodigal son. For Lee, and his wife, Gill, the words she uttered went straight to his heart and seemed to confirm a process that had began to take shape in the preceding months.

Lee had grown up in a family that didn't believe in God and yet had always felt drawn to religion. As a teenager he received instruction in the Catholic faith from Franciscan friars in his home town of Ipswich. Although he attended church and intellectually assented to a set of beliefs, he lacked a personal experience of Jesus.

In his early twenties, Lee worked selling life insurance door-to-door. One day he called on the home of someone who seemed very different, interested, and interesting. The man started taking about his own life assurance policy – his relationship with Jesus. Lee recalls that it was "neither contrived or overbearing but rather an honest conversation about the reality of Jesus" in this man's life.

He turned out to be a Pentecostal minister in the local Assemblies of God. Whether out of sympathy, or not, he bought an insurance policy, and Lee called on him the next day to ask him more about his faith. Lee too gave his life to Jesus and was baptised in the Holy Spirit.

The following 15 years were eventful as the Pentecostal church in the early 1980s split and Lee became more involved in the house church or new church movement, moving to Lowestoft as part of a church plant. In an era when church division seemed an everyday occurrence, he moved to a succession of churches, and even led a small church for a time, before settling in an evangelical church in Beccles.

During this time, his faith came under significant strain through redundancy, and an increasing unease about his church's attitude towards the LGBTQ community and opposition to women in ministry.

Redundancy enabled Lee to pursue a new direction and, in 1996, he started a degree course, initially in sociology and then politics, at the University of East Anglia. In that first year, his faith unravelled, no longer able to accept the literal interpretation of the Bible that his fundamentalist and evangelical background had espoused. He turned away from the church and religion, divorced, and like the prodigal son went away to do his own thing, no longer feeling that he needed a relationship with Jesus.

He remarried, completed his degree and went on to pass a Masters in International Relations, before gaining a PhD. An academic career beckoned, initially at Oxford Brookes University and then back at UEA. Starting out as a junior lecturer, within a few years he was promoted to Professor and Head of one of the largest schools in the university. He appeared on national and local radio and television, had books published, and spoke at conferences around the world. And yet, he says: "something was missing".

"There was a gradual awareness that although I had abandoned God, God had not abandoned me," said Lee. "When loved ones were seriously ill then something, or someone, caused me to go into empty churches to pray and light a candle."

When repelled by researching the machinations of the Christian Right in America, he felt compelled to go to Northern Ireland to research the church's role in ending conflict, and discovered genuine faith among those he interviewed that caused him to reflect on his own relationship with Jesus.

"Half way through the writing of a book on Religion and International Security, I knew that I had to get right with God and start going to church again. To be like the prodigal and return home. St Catherine's was the first church I visited and I have been there ever since.

"My journey out of a spiritual wilderness is testimony to the faithfulness of Jesus. Although I went away from him, he never once left me and drew me back to him."

Since returning to faith, Lee's priorities have been transformed as he seeks, falteringly, to follow the leading and direction of the Holy Spirit. In 2023, he became a pioneer Licensed Lay Minister, left academia to work for a homelessness charity and, since retiring in 2024, devotes his time to writing, peace and justice activism, and convening the Progressive Christianity Network in Norwich.

www.pcnbritain.org.uk/groups/pcn-norwich

His latest book is Liberation Christians Daily Devotional, 365 short biographies of Christians around the world who have sought to emulate Jesus life and teachings, together with quotes, prayers and reading plan. It is available on Amazon.

Trevor's vision after near-death experience

Former Norfolk Fire Brigade technician **Trevor Palmer** died for 15 minutes in a Norwich hospital and received a vision from God before doctors managed to resuscitate him. **Keith Morris** reports.



Pictured is Trevor Palmer in his Norwich home.

Trevor, aged 77, went into the Norfolk & Norwich Hospital for a heart oblation operation to rectify his atrial fibrillation condition on August 20, 2024.

"I remember signing the paperwork but nothing else until I woke up three days later in a side room with a nurse there," said Trevor, who was on a life-support machine for 15 hours and in a coma for three days.

"The doctor came in and told me that things didn't go according to plan. 'We started the procedure and you were under full anaesthetic and you had a cardiac arrest and were clinically dead,' the doctor told me. 'We resuscitated you and put you onto end-of-life support in ICU and with the chaplaincy. Things looked pretty grim but we are very pleased and you seemed to recover a lot more quickly than we expected, especially considering you also had pneumonia,' recalled Trevor.

Trevor, who retired in 2007 after working for the Fire Brigade in Hethersett, felt at peace when he woke up: "I was at peace but different than I was before," he said. "In a way I felt that I had my old body but I had a new spirit. I felt very much more at peace than I had for a long while."

Trevor also remembered having a dream or vision while he was unconscious: "In the dream I found myself in a large peaceful, quiet room. There stood my church pastor Noel Wood, from Taverham Evangelical Church, holding a Bible saying something over me. Beside him was my son David and my wife Susan and I was stood up looking at them. They all looked so sad."

"A couple of days later they moved me out of the end-of-life ward and Susan brought my Bible in for me. Noel came in and I asked him what he was reading over me when he came to see me when I was unconscious. He could not understand how I knew that had happened, but told me what he had read over me.

"He said it was Psalm 118 v 17: 'I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the Lord has done.'

"And I knew straight away why the Lord had allowed this to happen - so that I could give that testimony to other people."

Over the last 18 months, Trevor has faced seven full theatre procedures.

"I have not felt afraid at all but at peace. I sincerely believe that God allowed me to come back to do his work. Today there is so much interest in the supernatural whether that is angels, ghost stories and the occult that people seem really interested in my story.

"I now have amyloidosis on my heart, which is a terminal illness. I understand the situation but I am really happy to be here and also happy to be with the Lord – so I class myself as a winner all round. Susan has done well to adjust to it all.

"All I know is that while I am here I have to just keep on telling people what God has done for me. God is totally in charge and there is nothing I can do about it. Whatever my destiny is, it will be with God – his grace is good. I have prayed that I keep the soul in me that cares for others and I don't become hard and selfish because of my experience.

"God has brought me through this so that I can tell people how powerful, loving and gracious he is. He is in charge despite what this world thinks."

Susan said: I feel very happy to have Trevor back but sad that he is having to take one day at a time now. But I know that God will look after me when Trevor is no longer around."

Pastor Noel Wood said: "Trevor's story is quite incredible. God definitely stepped in and did a miracle for Him.

"I do believe that God saves us from death for a reason and it is great to see that Trevor is getting his story out there and giving God the glory for his miraculous recovery. We continue to pray for him that God would complete his healing."

Daily break to refresh the soul

Rev Christina Rees has discovered a way to find time to listen to God each day, and have a mini-holiday at the same time!

■ The holiday season is upon us! Families with children may have to wait until the school term has finished but for many, the summer has already started – even if on occasion the weather forgets what it's supposed to be doing at this time of year!

We know that, for some, going away means a welcome respite from unsuitable living conditions or from a difficult relationship. For many of us, however, a holiday is, above all, a chance to stop work and step away from our normal routines for a blessed few days or weeks.

I've had a problem with holidays, though, which has had nothing to do with my time away, but with managing my re-entry back into 'normal' life. No matter how happy I am to be back in my own home, I've often gone through a few days of post-holiday blues.

A lot of it is, of course, having to pick up a demanding schedule again, but it's not only that. After all, I'm committed to what I do. It's more that I miss a certain kind of freedom of thought that I seem to find only when I'm away. I miss having time to reflect. I miss giving myself permission to do nothing.

So, for the last few years, I've been building some of these elements into my daily routine. It has meant getting up earlier, but it's given me time to read and think and pray and listen for what God might be saying to me. Every morning I go swimming with a small group of friends, rain or shine, and I always come home feeling ready for whatever the day will hold.

Of course, it's always a special treat to be able to go away, but now I have time each day that makes me feel as if I am on holiday – and a bonus is that I know my morning pot of coffee will be just how I like it!

■ Rev Christina Rees CBE is a writer and broadcaster and Associate Priest at St Peter's Church, Sheringham.

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Hospital chaplain's test of faith

A Stage 4 cancer diagnosis last July, plus hospital visits and treatment, tested the faith of Norfolk hospital chaplain **Andrew Jeffery** from Swaffham but, after praying, he felt God tell him to start writing, so he did. **Peter Bending** reports.

Andrew, 45, became a Christian in his late teens, in Thetford, turning his back on drugs. He began working as a Youth Pastor at Oasis Centre in Swaffham before moving into administrative roles and pastoring the church for six years alongside his wife Amy and their two daughters Alice and Amelie.

Since then, he has been a chaplain at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in King's Lynn, working alongside palliative care nurses and patients on the ward. Two years ago, he moved into the role of Lead Freedom to Speak Up Guardian, providing support for staff with their roles and concerns.

Last July, Andrew was diagnosed with Stage 4 inoperable metastatic bowel cancer.

"Being diagnosed with cancer certainly rocked my faith," said Andrew. "It was unexpected and somewhat overwhelming. As time has passed, my faith has grown and held onto the faithfulness of God. There are definite answers to prayer, such as the incredible care and treatment I've had since being diagnosed."

Andrew was in and out of Addenbrookes six times last year with bowel obstructions and chronic pain. In this time, he had seven rounds of chemotherapy and work was not possible. Due to complications, his last round of treatment was in December. Andrew now receives palliative care and has recently begun new treatment.

"I'm grateful for all my family and friends who've given support and lifted up prayers to God for my healing," said Andrew.

Through all his hospital trips and treatment, Andrew began writing.

"I consider myself to be somewhat creative, so during my time off work, I decided to journal thoughts, beliefs and feelings. This led to the first book "(Ab)normal Christianity", where I challenge the idea that the Christian experience always looks and sounds the same. Your experience may be totally different to mine, but it doesn't make it wrong. 'The Gospel That Walks with a Limp' focuses on the reality that weakness can lead to witness."

In the book, Andrew dismantles the myth of normal Christianity and invites readers into the 'wild, beautiful, disruptive life Jesus calls us to live'. Andrew says that the world doesn't need more normal Christians, it needs believers who are fully alive.

This has not been Andrew's first experience of significant ill health.

"My first experience of serious illness happened in 2007 when I was diagnosed with an autoimmune disease. I was in my mid-twenties, married, and raising our first daughter, Alice, who was only nine months old. I remember leading consultants coming and scratching their heads, puzzled by what disease was causing all the issues I was facing. The whole experience caused me to lean on God as Healer from a very different angle. It's one thing to declare healing when you're fit and healthy; it's another level to do the same when you're unwell and feeling vulnerable.



Pictured is Andrew Jeffrey with wife Amy.

"The apostle Paul first preached the gospel to the Galatians because he was sick. In some denominations and church groups, there can be doctrine that says Christians shouldn't be sick. That Christians don't need medicine. However, we find in Galatians that Paul was not only sick, but he used it as an opportunity to reach a new audience. His sickness didn't become an excuse; it was a tool for evangelism."

Andrew has recently begun a book tour for (Ab)normal Christianity speaking about the themes of the book and his experiences. He is still writing and has just finished a new book on the topic of salvation.

"I'm glad to have written these books and have them published. I'm also incredibly grateful for all those who've bought the book and given feedback and reviews. I will continue to write and am currently working on a book called "Impossible: What if change is actually possible?"."

Andrew's books are available from the Oasis Centre Swaffham and on Amazon. To purchase books or for more details on Andrew's book tour, please contact oasiscentreswaffham@gmail.com

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Project gets church buzzing

30,000 bees are helping a Gorleston church reach out into its local community. **Tony Rothe** reports.





Pictured are the bee-keeping and Men's Shed initiatives at St Mary Magdalene.

An apiary with 30,000 bees at the church of St Mary Magdalene in Gorleston is one of many initiatives at the church helping it reach out into a community where there is a number of challenges.

The bee-keeping project was launched at the end of 2025, aimed at promoting food security, wellbeing and community through beekeeping. The church partnered with local Community Interest Company (CIC) Project Apis, whose aim is to make beekeeping accessible to everyone, especially in places where people might not otherwise get the chance to connect with the natural world.

Vicar Rev Matthew Price said: "We had 20 people in the initial training, but only five were from the church – the rest joined us from the wider local community. The nature-connection factor was really good for people's wellbeing – some were experiencing mental health issues and noticed a marked improvement as they engaged with the project outdoors. A sense of purpose, coupled with being outside, learning alongside others created a wonderful context to share the joy of being a part of God's great creation."

Since then, parishioners have been rallying round to get involved. Local resident Lynn Ellis started taking her granddaughter to the toddler group at the church and helping out, and heard about the beekeeping. So, she and her daughter went along to a meeting, and then started caring for the bees once a week. "And we absolutely love it – they are fascinating," she said. "When I come on a Wednesday to do the bees, I found myself coming a little bit earlier and earlier, because I was enjoying coming to the Open House café space, too, and enjoying the community."

But the bee-keeping is just one of many initiatives at St Mary Magdalene aimed at reaching out to and involving the local community, which has been listed as one of 225 'Left-behind Neighbourhoods' in England, reflecting the dual disadvantage of high levels of deprivation and socio-economic challenges, in a recent report by the Church Urban Fund.

Matthew has been the vicar at St Mary Magdalene since January 2018. Right from the start, he and his team intentionally reached out to serve the needs of the parish. They are passionate about empowering the community, drawing on the God-given strengths and resources that already exist in the area in order to see lives transformed.

The church has more than 80 volunteers working with them, many of whom don't attend services on a Sunday. Anna Price, Community Development Worker, told the Church Urban Fund: "People want to be part of something great for the community. We're committed to raising up people from within the community so that they can take ownership and leadership."

Anna's colleague Anna Heydon, Deputy Community Lead, agrees: "Everything is designed really carefully to be relational. We really aim to work as much as possible at grassroots level. Starting with people: what the needs are, but what the passion is as well."

The church emergency food bank and fuel bank is a prime example. "It's not just about coming and collecting food and leaving. Everyone that comes in speaks to a community support worker who can then connect them to further support, so that we're not just delivering crisis support. The percentage of people coming back to the food bank is a lot lower than the national average because we connect them with the support they need.

"People can also go through to Open House coffee morning , even if it is just on this one occasion, and they can see that they're welcomed as part of a bigger community. They're more to us than just someone to give food to, we actually want them to know that they're valued and welcomed. And for some people, that is a starting point for connecting to other things."

St Mary Magdalen hosts Identity Youth Project, which works in partnership with four local churches to serve young people in the Gorleston area, and Matthew also plays a part in school life in the area, with some children bringing their families to church activities as a result. There is also the Magpies parent and toddler group every Monday morning in term time.

These are just some of ten plus volunteer-led community groups and projects, five annual community events, an on-site signposting and advice service, and a volunteering programme.

One of the particular areas of need on the estate is lack of qualifications, so the church has run literacy and numeracy classes, and also cookery classes. They have also done training for their volunteers as well, like the barista training to try and develop people's skills and make them more employable.

The church also runs a "Men's Shed" community workshop, hosts Scouts, Slimming World and dog training sessions, and even hosted a husting with all the candidates standing for the 2024 general election in Great Yarmouth.

For Anna Heydon, the work at St Mary's is reflective of what Jesus did on earth. She concluded, "It is being with people, empowering people, engaging people at whatever stage of their journey, not waiting for them to necessarily have everything sorted in terms of their faith, but engaging them in His work as He was doing it."

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Pictured at Manifest King's Lynn is DJ Shunz and, below, Philippa Hannah.

Music, dancing and faith at King's Lynn festival

The free Manifest Christian festival, an afternoon of music, dancing, food and testimony, once again took place in King's Lynn, at The Walks park, on Saturday June 13. **Peter Bending** reports.

■ The fourth annual Manifest, organised by The King's Glory Church, took over the historic park in the centre of the town for an afternoon of open-air worship and sharing the gospel.

The free event centres around live music and testimonies from the main stage with food stalls, games, and children's activities. This year was the most successful and sunny to date with hundreds of visitors gathering in the park.

International Christian artist and MOBO Vine award winner Limoblaze headlined this year's event alongside DJ Shunz and returning favourites singer-songwriter Philippa Hannah, and The King's Glory Choir.

Tough Talk, a group of strongmen evangelists, also returned to share powerful testimonies while facilitating a weight-lifting competition.

Organiser Olivia O'Neill said: "The TKG Choir, Philippa Hannah, Limoblaze and DJ Shunz delighted everyone and got the crowd going left and right to the beat. The ice cream and burger van had a queue all day. Tough Talk announced a lady winner for the weightlifting and the sun shone all day."

After The King's Glory Choir performed, Pastor Dapo Adegoke from the church took to the stage with a message of hope, joy and transformation.

He said: "God is not calling us to religion, he is calling us to relationship. He is not calling us to judgement, he is calling us to forgiveness. He is not calling us to earn his love, he is calling us to receive the love.

"This is the word we have for you today. A word of hope, a word of joy, and a word of transformation. Everyone, try your local church, any church next to you, go in there and ask, 'what's the deal about this Jesus?' and we can start this conversation.

"God bless you and keep on enjoying yourself."

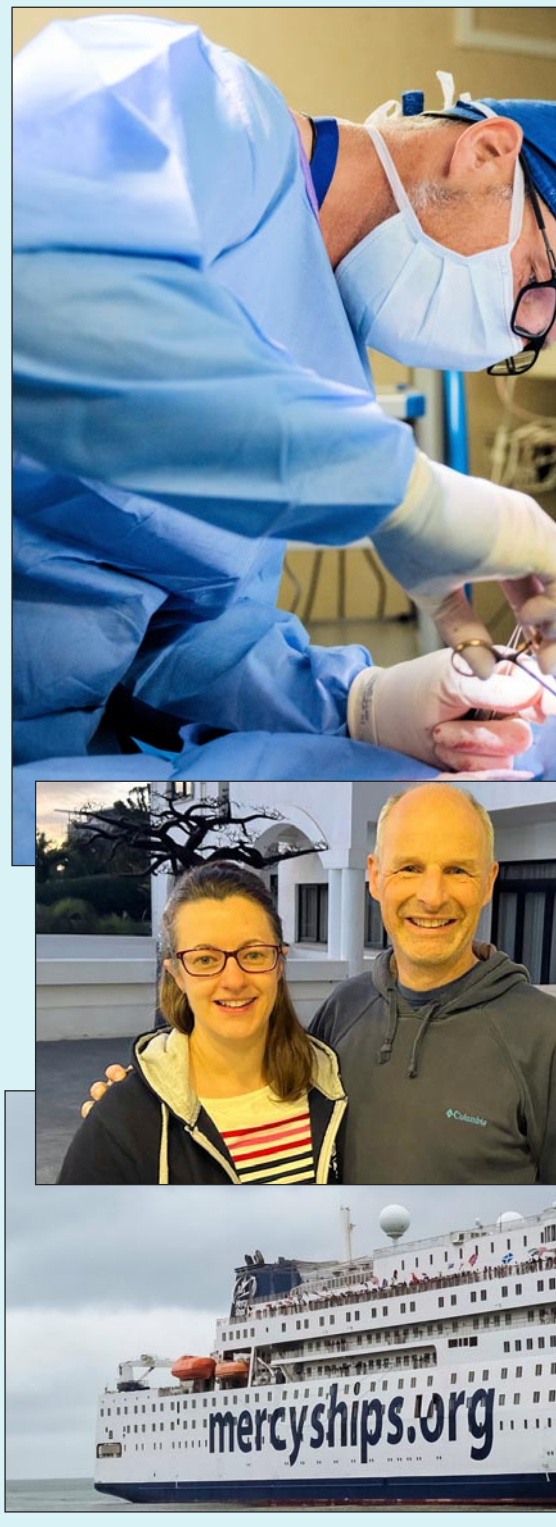
More images and videos from the event can be viewed on the Manifest social media accounts and on The King's Glory YouTube channel.

You can find out more about the event and subscribe for updates at: manifestkingslynn.com



Norfolk surgeo

Two Norfolk plastic surgeons are using their God-given skills to help transform lives in floating hospitals with the **Mercy Ships** charity in sub-Saharan Africa. **Keith Morris** reports.



Guido Köhler and Collette Thomson are plastic surgeons at the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital and, every year, the duo volunteer to join Christian charity Mercy Ships to use their skills to provide free, life-changing surgery to women, men and children who would otherwise have little or no access to healthcare.

For Guido, who worships with his family at EAST church in Norwich, the connection began long before he ever stepped aboard a hospital ship.

"When I was a child, I had a dream of a big white ship," he recalls. "For years I forgot about it, but the first time I arrived at the Anastasis ship in Sierre Leone in 2002, this memory came flashing back."

Guido's first experience with Mercy Ships remains etched in his memory.

"I will never forget that first time volunteering in Sierra Leone," said Guido. "The devastating civil war had recently ended and it was so hard to see the war-torn country – many people displaced, war wounds and severe healthcare needs. Seeing advanced tumors that you'd never see in higher-income countries was really heartbreaking."

The need remains immense. Today, safe surgery is still out of reach for nine out of ten people in sub-Saharan Africa. Conditions that could be easily treated often leave people living with pain, disability and social isolation.

On board the Mercy Ships, volunteer surgeons, nurses, cooks, engineers, teachers and many others come from around the globe to give patients free, vital healthcare. Every year, around 3,000 surgeries are performed, transforming lives and restoring futures.

More than two decades later, Guido continues to return year after year, making him one of the Christian charity's longest-serving volunteer surgeons: "My faith is very important to me. I have been blessed in life through upbringing, training, gifting etc… things out of my control. I see it all as a blessing from God. He gave us the job to use our life to do things in this world which He would do, like operating on those who have no access to free, safe surgery."

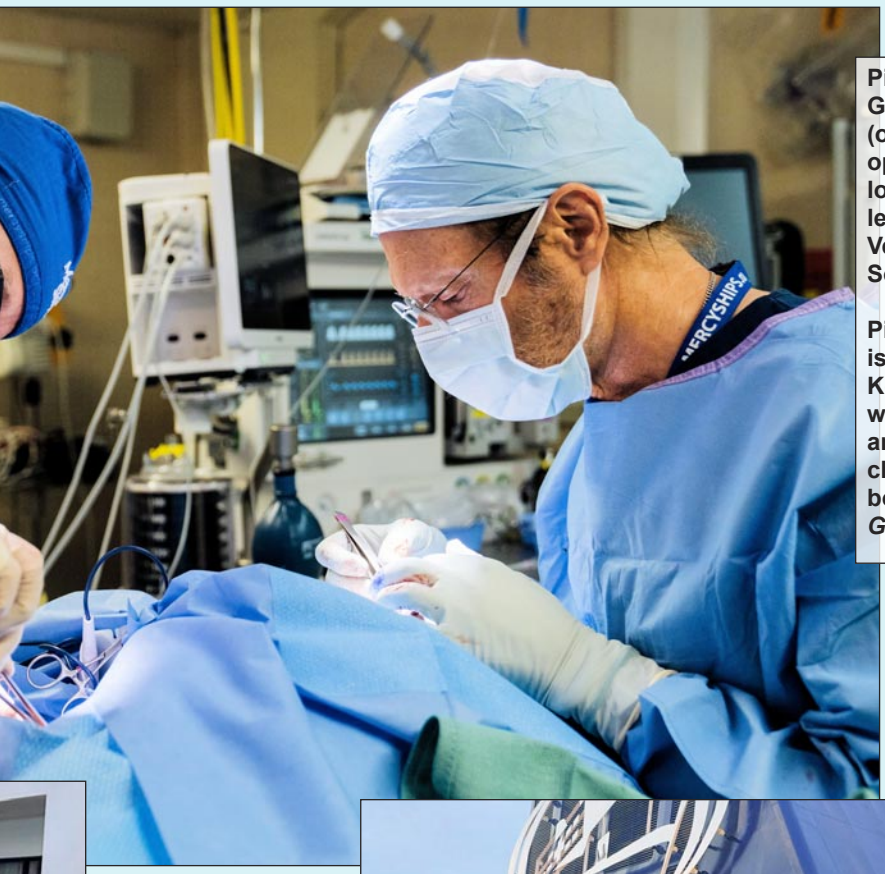
For Guido, Mercy Ships has also had a profound impact on his own life.

In 2003, while serving on the Anastasis, he met his future wife, Serena, an American nurse volunteering on board. Together, they have raised three children, and recently the whole family returned to serve on the Global Mercy.

"I was asked to cover Christmas and New Year in the hospital, so that other volunteers could have a break," explains Guido. "To make it work we decided to go out as a family. My children are 13, 15 and 17. It was really special having them onboard; they'd come down with me to the ward to meet the patients. Even now they're still talking about the experience and we're considering going out again to volunteer this Christmas."

Their temporary home was no ordinary ship. The Global Mercy is the world's largest purpose-built civilian hospital ship. Measuring 174 metres long and weighing 37,000 GT, the ship features six operating rooms, a hospital deck with 200 beds, a laboratory and various clinics, including general outpatient, eye and dental clinics. The Global Mercy also has first-class train-

ns transforming lives on ships



Pictured left is Guido Köhler (on the left), operating with long-time colleague Tertius Venter from South Africa.

Pictured below is Guido Köhler with wife Serena and their three children on board the *Global Mercy*.

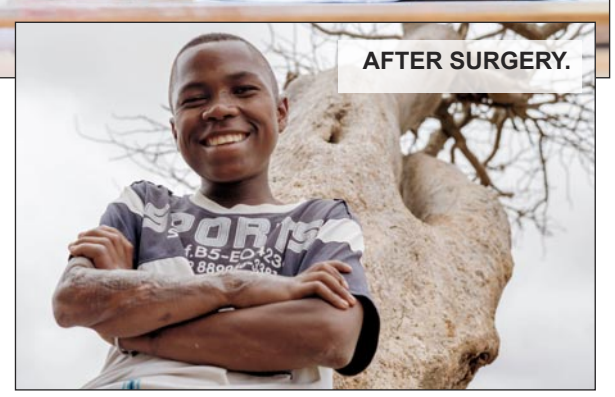


Pictured left is Guido Köhler and Norfolk colleague Collette Thomson and, below the *Global Mercy*.



ARM RESTORED: Pierre was 12 when he had surgery on the *Africa Mercy* in Madagascar. When he was six months old, a severe infection appeared on his face and spread to his arms, causing extensive skin damage and leaving large open wounds. For months, the family sought treatment, visiting doctors and spending what little they had.
Eventually, the infection healed. But as the wounds closed, his skin tightened, pulling his right arm into a contracture. His elbow, wrist, and fingers locked and immobility set in.
A 10-hour surgery on the *Africa Mercy* ship with volunteer plastic surgeons, gave Pierre a straight arm so that now he can cycle comfortably, hold an axe and take part in family work on the farm.





ing facilities for local medical professionals and is home to up to 600 volunteers who serve on board.

For fellow Norfolk surgeon Collette Thomson, it was hearing Guido's experiences – and knowing she would be joining a world-class medical team – that gave her the confidence to volunteer.

"I heard first-hand from Guido about what it's like to work on the ships," explains Collette. "Knowing that Mercy Ships has a very safe, consistent environment with all the gear you need, plus an excellent rehabilitation team, means that you're leaving each patient in safe hands."

Since then, Collette has volunteered in Madagascar and Sierra Leone and is preparing for her fourth assignment with Mercy Ships in Ghana.

Yet it's not just the surgery that keeps drawing her back. "One of the things I love on board is the ship-wide community," explains Collette. "The work is really busy but then you'll eat your lunch with an engineer or a Sierra Leone day crew, or even the Captain and hear about all they're involved in.

"There have been times when we've had really difficult surgical cases and the whole ship will be praying. I'll come up for my dinner and crew members will stop me and tell me they're praying. It's so amazing to have that kind of support in a working environment."

It takes a crew to run a hospital ship, both abroad and at home. Only 50 per cent of our volunteers are medics. No matter your skills, Mercy Ships have a place for you.

■ **Find out how to volunteer with Mercy Ships, at: mercyships.org.uk/volunteer**

Choose kindness,
change lives

Mercy Ships



Annica with our volunteer physical therapist, Orianna, after free surgery with Mercy Ships.

Volunteers are the heartbeat of all we do at Mercy Ships.

For nine-year-old Annica, our hospital ship feels like a safe place to be.

That's because volunteers like Orianna are by her side, every step of the way. Seeing her smile every morning felt like a ray of sunshine.

Mercy Ships brings free, life-changing surgeries to people across sub-Saharan Africa. And we need your help.

It takes thousands of volunteers like Orianna to keep our hospital ships running. We need surgeons, doctors, nurses and more to bring vital medical care to the poorest places.

If you've always wanted to make a meaningful difference, we've got a place on board for you.

Registered with FUNDRAISING REGULATOR

Find your place on board:
mercyships.org.uk/volunteer

Registered Charity No: 1053055. Registered Charity in Scotland No: SC039743. Company No: 3147724 (England and Wales)
© 2025 Mercy Ships UK Photos: Mercy Ships/Joshua Kiew Wing Chau.



Pictured is Padre George Smith (centre) in Alphonse de Neuville's The Defence of Rorke's Drift (1880). Public Domain.

Chaplain hero of Rorke's Drift

A Norfolk-born military chaplain who was one of the heroes of the legendary battle of Rorke's Drift in the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879, has been remembered as his medals and personal effects have been sold at auction in London for £65,000. **Keith Morris** reports.

George Smith was born on January 8, 1845, at Docking, Norfolk, the son of a master shoemaker. By 1861 young Smith was working as a railway clerk and living near King's Lynn. He entered St Augustine's College, Canterbury, Kent in 1861 to take up Holy Orders.

A missionary in southern Africa, he was appointed Rector of Estcourt, Natal in 1872 and with the outbreak of the Zulu War, was appointed an Assistant Chaplain to the Forces.

It was in January 1879 that he was to find himself at the centre of one of the most famous events in British military history, when a 150-strong garrison held off an attacking force of thousands of warriors surrounding their tiny mission station in a far-flung corner of Africa.

Smith's striking physical appearance is noted both in print and in several famous oil paintings of the battle:

'A tall man with a great red beard, he had been appointed Chaplain to the Volunteers and was invariably clad in a tattered alpaca ecclesiastical frock, which had long since turned green with age.'

Chaplain Smith was the first to sight the Zulu regiments bearing down on Rorke's Drift. As fighting began soon after, "Ammunition Smith" as he would become known, ran among the troops of the 2nd Warwickshire Regiment of Foot and Royal Engineers, with a large haversack filled with loose cartridges about his neck.

According to an account at the time: "He circled the perimeter incessantly, filling out-thrust hands and expense pouches and replenishing his supply from time to time from the open boxes in front of the storehouse.

"He exhorted the men with wild Biblical phrases, sternly reproving every blasphemy and obscenity his ear caught; defenders of the barricades that day recalled him shouting out: "Don't swear, men, don't swear – but shoot them, boys, shoot them!"

"The din was deafening, and few voices could be distinguished over the continual crash of the rifles and the clanging of assegai blades on barrels and bayonets. The incessant shouts of "uSuthu!" throbbed from thousands of Zulu throats, now gathered in a unified chant, now rising to a shrieking crescendo during the rushes."

The 150 British defenders killed over 350 Zulus with a loss of just 17 of their comrades before the attackers withdrew the following day. By the time the enemy retreated, the defenders were down to their last few hundred bullets.

The story was immortalised in the 1964 film Zulu, starring Stanley Baker and Michael Caine.

Padre Smith's calm under fire and tireless efforts to supply ammunition were credited with helping the defenders hold out through the night, as the Zulus repeatedly stormed their post and his role in the action was widely celebrated, including in two famous oil paintings of the action.



Padre George Smith, courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery.

Promoted to full army chaplain, he served in later imperial conflicts in Egypt and the Sudan. After the battle, Smith was offered the choice of a Victoria Cross or a permanent commission as a military chaplain. He decided on the latter – believing it offered greater security for his future. Had he chosen differently, he would have been the 12th recipient of the Victoria Cross at Rorke's Drift.

He retired in 1906 and settled in Preston, Lancashire, where he spent his later years travelling.

He went to Australia and visited the Art Gallery of New South Wales to see the famous painting of the Defence of Rorke's Drift, in which he is prominently depicted.

Gother Victor Fyers Mann, the gallery's director, later said: "The Rev George Smith, who is prominent in the painting, visited Sydney in 1912 or '13 and called on me when I was director of the art gallery.

"He had not seen the completed picture, though he posed for the artist in London.

"A tall man with a long grey beard entered my room and told me that his name was Mr Smith and stated the object of his visit.

"On inspecting the picture he was visibly upset upon seeing his late comrades, many of whom had since died of their wounds, and stood for some time before the painting in silence with bowed head and appeared very much affected. It was some time before he spoke, and then he said it was all too real and brought back to him the tragic experience."

Smith died on November 26, 1918. He is buried in Preston, where his headstone describes him as "a brave and modest Christian gentleman".

His medals and personal effects were put up for auction by a descendant in New Zealand and were sold on April 23 by Spink Live, based in London, for £65,000.

Marcus Budgen, head of Spink's medals department, said: "The fact that they are associated with Rorke's Drift makes all the difference to their value and appeal.

"It's one of the most important Rorke's Drift medal groups to come to the market in the last 30 - 40 years.

"It's an incredible story and the group has been in the family for 150 years. It's super special and we were very excited about it."

■ Article extracts from: www.spink.com

Norfolk TV star Simon talks of love, loss and his faith

Norfolk born Christian TV presenter Simon Thomas has spoken of how love, loss and faith have shaped his life, on a special edition of the BBC's Songs of Praise, recorded in his home town of Cromer. **Keith Morris** reports.

Speaking to presenter Sean Fletcher, Simon said he still called Cromer home although he had only lived there for three years: "I come back every summer and my dad led a beach mission here as a curate at the parish church. I have so many happy memories on Cromer beach – which is where we always were. For me it's a place of peace, the peace that passes all understanding."

Simon spoke about the occasion when, aged seven, he was climbing on an old tree when his mum said to him "we must move now," then again more urgently.

"30 seconds after we got to the other side of the clearing this sound came through the forest like a tornado jet," said Simon. "I remember looking up and seeing fire above our heads, an almighty thud and smoke. The tree where I had been sat had been blown apart – it was ball lightning.

"I remember asking mum 'what was it that made you move?' and she said 'it was the voice of God' To me I look back on that as the moment that God became real. Some may say it was an amazing coincidence, I don't. I felt that God had tapped me on the shoulder in a dramatic way and said 'this is not some made-up story, some fairy-tale that your Dad talks about every week in church. I'm real."

Simon began his TV career presenting Blue Peter more than 25 years ago.

"My career in TV was 100% a calling from God. I left university in 1995 and I left with a dream to become a TV presenter.

"My faith is about a relationship. It is not about me doing one thing and God doing something else. I asked God to please give me a sign that I am not about to waste the next few years chasing a dream which he was not in.

"I went downstairs and there was a Christian magazine with an article by Pam Rhodes about why we needed more Christians in the media – in directing and presenting and journalism and that was the green light for me."

Simon met and fell in love with his first wife Gemma on Blue Peter. In 2005, he secured a prime presenting job on Sky Sports and they married and were both members of a local church. Together they had a son – Ethan.

But in 2017, their lives were devastated. Gemma was diagnosed with a rare form of cancer and died just days later.

How did you get through that period, Sean asked Simon? "Sometimes I look back and I don't know – the biggest thing was family, friends, that network of people I had around me. I also knew I had to be there for Ethan. He had lost his mum, he did not need to lose his dad as well. He gave me a reason to get up every morning and a reason to live.

"But there were times when I did not really want to be here. Grief is tough, loss is tough. When you go through tough things in life, whatever it may be, it feels that life before that was colourful and suddenly, in that moment, all of the colour gets sucked out of it. It feels like life is really black and white. I was like 'I'm not going to feel this pain' so that is when I started drinking and it took me to some really, really dark places.

"I initially did blame God for what happened, I was incredibly angry at God. And you know what, it's ok to be angry with God. I then was able to let go that anger towards God, that somehow he had allowed this to happen.

"Listen, life is tough and even if we have a faith we are not promised an easy life. But without the hope my faith brings, there is no way I would be sitting here talking to you today."

Simon has moved on to find happier times, marrying Derrina in 2021, who has become a step-mum to Ethan, and they have had two more children together.

"I feel really blessed and you can enjoy life again – life can be good but it will never be the same again," said Simon. "Back in 2017, I was like a broken piece of furniture that was brought into God's repair room and, over the last few years, he has rebuilt me, he has repaired me. I am different in lots of ways but I still resemble what came before."

With the World Cup coming up, sports fan Simon says that as a nation we are going into it with hope that this may be the time: "It's a bit like life, he says, "what gets you through is clinging onto hope."

You can watch the Songs of Praise episode, first shown on June 7, for 11 months at: www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer



Simon Thomas, right, with Songs of Praise present Sean Fletcher on Cromer beach. Picture © BBC.



Celebrate

Norwich & Norfolk

Highlighting the work of the Norwich & Norfolk Christian community

CCN: walking alongside prison leavers in Norfolk


Members of the CCN team at the Bishop's Garden event in Norwich.

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.

Originally formed from the national model of Community Chaplaincy Association, CCN is a Christian-based charity in Norwich employing a small staff team to recruit, train and support volunteer mentors; to assess potential clients; to liaise with the prison authorities, probation, and other relevant agencies; and to allocate clients to mentors. We often meet clients at St Stephen's Church café.

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."

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.

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

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, Caroline Hill, 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," said Caroline. "But 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

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 Friday of each month from 12.30 - 2pm. Tel: 07508 811020 or 07951 567684. It is completely free of charge.

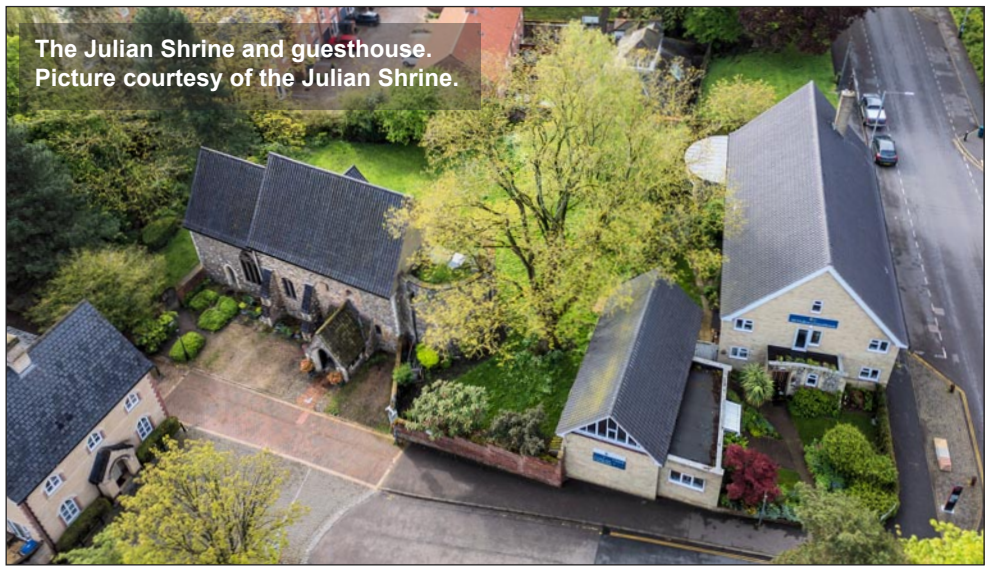
Charles and Vivien Strafford are Directors of Norwich Healing Rooms. They explain: "Our team is dedicated to seeing the same healings which took place in the Bible take place today, because Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever."



"The impact on the people that come to visit us is very powerful. We are the hands and feet

Julian Shrine launches £400k appeal

The Julian Shrine in Norwich city centre has launched an ambitious £400k fundraising campaign as part of its plan to secure the long-term sustainability of the historic site, as phase one gains planning approval.


The Julian Shrine and guesthouse. Picture courtesy of the Julian Shrine.

Significant structural work is required at St Julian's Church to protect and preserve the building as a parish church, pilgrimage destination and site of historic importance, explained Hospitality Manager Josiah English.

"Work is also needed to make the whole Shrine wheelchair-accessible, enable toilet access in the church, and more.

"We are operating a phased approach to the work required. Because Phase Two, which focusses on St Julian's Church and churchyard, is a much more complex and sensitive project requiring additional attention, we will begin by securing our future financially by investing in the upper Shrine works which will help us facilitate visitors and pilgrims during the much longer and more costly work at St Julian's, which may at times require the church to close to visitors," said Josiah.

Working with local architect firm Lewis & Tyrrell, the shrine has gained planning permission to open up the loft in All Hallows as a second floor, with six dormer windows, open plan kitchen/dining/living space, and two bedrooms. This living space will offer significantly more privacy than currently available to our resident steward, improving mental health and work/life balance for a demanding role.

Josiah said: "We are delighted that City planners have green-lit plans to extend into the loft space at the Shrine's retreat centre, All Hallows Guesthouse, which will provide much needed living space for the resident manager, and open up new rooms for guests to help the Shrine safeguard its future financially. Plans have also been approved for new landscaping including level access paving at the Shrine's upper entrance, and a newly built traditional lychgate inscribed with words from Mother Julian's Revelations of Divine Love which will form a welcoming entrance to the Shrine for pilgrims and visitors.

"By freeing up the current steward's flat we can reinstate an eighth bedroom plus additional self-catering flat ideal for guests on sabbatical or longer term visits," said Josiah. "This will give us up to 40% additional capacity for groups or individual stays, enabling long-term financial stability for the charity.

"Following the loft renovation, we will relandscape the front garden to include sloped brick paths giving wheelchair access to the retreat house and visitor centre with continued improvements to the gardens as an important wildlife habitat. We will replace the PVC porch at the visitor centre with new exterior doors matching All Hallows, and install a traditional oak lychgate crafted by Norfolk artisans inscribed with words from Julian of Norwich which will form a welcoming entrance to the Shrine with greater visibility to visitors and discourage antisocial behaviour from passersby."

The cost for Phase One has been estimated at £400,000 and with £200,000 matched funding already in place the shrine is appealing to members of the public, near and far, for donations towards this important work, as well as applying for grant funding.

If you would like to partner with the Shrine, donations toward the building project or ongoing work are gratefully accepted. Click here to donate online. Or get in touch with Josiah with any questions at: josiah.english@julianofnorwich.org

Read more at: **www.julianshrine.org**

Good News for Norfolk Show

■ Two stands at this year's Royal Norfolk Show, in late June, offered thousands of visitors a place of welcome, rest and meaningful conversation about the Christian faith, a welcome respite from the intense heat.

The Good News Tent continued its decades-long tradition of hospitality and evangelism. Volunteer Robert Hodd, from Hebron Chapel in Costessey, explained the team's simple but heartfelt mission: "We love being here to share the Lord Jesus."

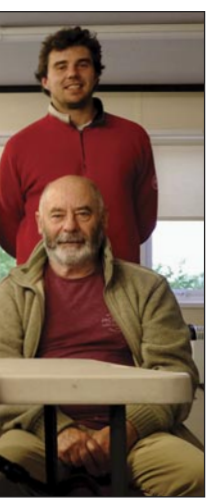
The tent offered free teas, coffees and cold drinks, alongside an invitation to sit down and chat. Visitors were encouraged to take home Christian literature, including the tent's increasingly popular bags for life printed with Bible verses.

The Good News Tent has been a fixture at the Show since 1966, with volunteers coming from churches across Norfolk and Suffolk and some have served for decades."

Nearby, the Chaplaincy Tent for the Royal Norfolk Show, supported by the Church of England, provided much-needed shade for rest, to enjoy refreshments – including a candy floss machine – and pastoral support.

"We're here to support chaplaincy at the Royal Norfolk Show," said Liz Humphries.

for prayer in Norwich



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.

Here are some personal stories from local people.

■ Young person who suffered severe migraines had prayer. Testimony completely healed.

■ Young person losing their sight came for prayer. They were to have an eye operation. Did not have to as they were healed.

■ A person with severe back pain asked for prayer and they were immediately healed.

■ A person following Buddhism came for prayer and left a Christian.

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

Email: info@norwichhealingrooms.co.uk



A decade of Bible teaching

■ The Word on the Wash day conference has celebrated a decade of teaching and encouraging Christians in Norfolk, and there's plenty more to come with dates and speakers set until 2028. **Peter Bending** reports.

The 2026 event will take place on Saturday October 3 at the King's Centre in Lynn.

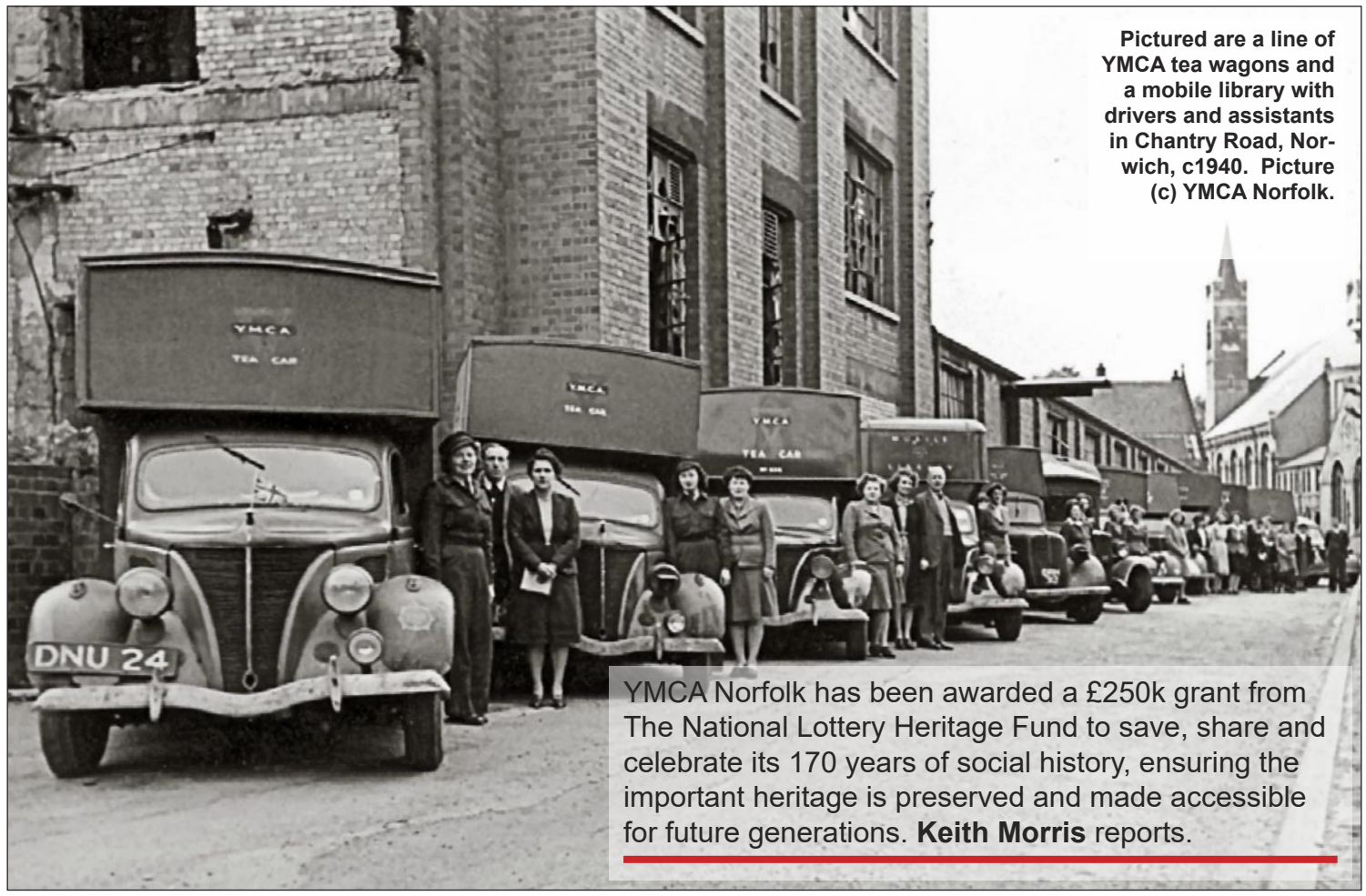
"This year we will be welcoming Luke Foster, lecturer at Oak Hill. With local church ministry and theological teaching experience, Luke will be giving two talks, using 1 John, with the title 'The sight that saves. Look back and belong. Look up and be changed.'

"There will also be a choice of two seminars. Luke will be looking at the importance of William Tyndale's translation of the New Testament from the original Greek into English as 2026 is the 500th anniversary of its first publication in England. Elaine Storkey, well-known broadcaster, theologian, and sociologist, will be dealing with the challenges of idolatry and post-truth and how Christians can both remain faithful in a post-Christian culture and response biblically to it."

We look forward to not only welcoming a good number of Christians from across the area but also friends who may not yet be believers but who would like to find out more. Hope to see you there," said Graham.

Dates and speakers for a further two years have been announced. The 2027 speaker will be well-known theologian and pastor Dr Andrew Ollerton. In 2028 the Rev Robert Slipper, vicar at Terrington St Clement Parish Church will be speaking.

Details at: www.wordonthewash.org.uk



Pictured are a line of YMCA tea wagons and a mobile library with drivers and assistants in Chantry Road, Norwich, c1940. Picture (c) YMCA Norfolk.

YMCA Norfolk has been awarded a £250k grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund to save, share and celebrate its 170 years of social history, ensuring the important heritage is preserved and made accessible for future generations. **Keith Morris** reports.

YMCA Norfolk's £250k heritage history project

Founded in Norwich in 1856, YMCA Norfolk has supported local communities for nearly two centuries. It has stood alongside young people through wars, the Great Flood of 1912, economic hardship, a global pandemic and profound social change. Despite this long and significant history, much of YMCA Norfolk's social heritage remains undocumented and at risk of being lost.

The project, Belonging Through Time – YMCA Norfolk at 170, will uncover hidden histories, untold stories and unsung heroes from the charity's past.

Marketing and fundraising manager Susie Knights said: "By capturing the voices and lived experiences of former and current service users, staff and volunteers, the project will create a lasting legacy to share the impact YMCA Norfolk has had throughout the county.

"Without the £249,808 grant, large parts of YMCA Norfolk's history, much of which exists only in personal memories, could disappear. This project will safeguard it's heritage and transform access to it, enabling people across Norfolk to connect with YMCA Norfolk's long-standing service within the community."

Over two years, the project will employ dedicated heritage staff and involve both the community and children, young people and families in shaping and co-producing its outputs.

It will deliver three public exhibitions across Norwich, Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn, alongside a ten-episode podcast series and documentary-style video capturing stories from past and present.

A 170-year heritage book will be produced and distributed across the county, complemented by a heritage walk in Norwich that will highlight key locations. Educational resource packs will be distributed to primary schools, while photographs, artefacts and oral histories will be collected, digitised and preserved as part of a lasting archive.

Together, these outputs will ensure YMCA Norfolk's heritage is both safeguarded and widely accessible.

"Young people currently engaging within YMCA Norfolk's services, particularly those who have experienced homelessness and social exclusion, will play an active role in researching, collecting and interpreting YMCA Norfolk's heritage, developing skills in storytelling, oral history, research and digital media," said Susie.

"This approach will ensure the heritage is not only preserved, but brought to life in inclusive and meaningful ways.

"The project will explore key themes from YMCA Norfolk's history, including how they've created safe spaces for young people to belong, responded to times of crisis, continuously adapted to social change, and how all services have been shaped by youth voice. Together, these stories will demonstrate how the charity has continually evolved to meet young people's needs throughout Norfolk whilst fostering belonging and resilience.

"In the long term, the project will celebrate and strengthen pride in YMCA Norfolk's 170-year legacy, deepen community connections, and ensure its rich social history is preserved and shared as a lasting asset for future generations," said Susie.

Community members, former residents, volunteers and staff are encouraged to get involved by sharing their stories and taking part in project activities.

If you have a story you'd like to share, please visit: **www.ymcanorfolk.org/170-stories**

