

British Youth For Christ, Neil O'Boyle, National Director

Following in the footsteps of giants is always overwhelming, however, in March this year we will be returning to where it all began for Youth for Christ 75 years ago as we celebrate our beginnings. Billy Graham launched the ministry at Birmingham town hall. So there seems no better place to remember the past, celebrating God's faithfulness while dreaming about our future! You are so welcome to join us (11th March, 6.30-9pm, yfc.co.uk/75) we would love you to be there. Not only will Neil be leading from the stage which Billy Graham once stood on, but there will be several of the previous national leaders of Youth for Christ in the hall as well (gulp). Event aside, for the first time in perhaps 22 months, we are beginning to feel the freedom to implement our bigger ambitions as we gain forward momentum again. The teams are back on the road, schools are completely open to our work, drop in clubs and many of our other activities are now reopened. We had big ambitions at the start of 20220 and now it is time to implement many of them. The pandemic, certainly accelerated much of our digital work and that will continue, but ultimately we recognise face to face youth work is where most traction is found.

Christmas was very special for us this year, our son Jake, who lives in America was able to join us with his wife Grace. We hadn't seen them in over 2.6 years, so while the house was tight (since all of our children returned) we loved every bit of it! Just a recap, Jake and Grace are in the States, Jake works for a trauma ministry, Grace is a youth pastor. Lucy is studying (year 2) at theological college. Molly is on the Youth for Christ Gap Year Touring Team. Maisey is still at home and is in her GCSE year! Joy is studying for her MA in Spiritual Formation, off the back of gaining her degree in Counselling. She also practices counselling while studying, and Neil continues to lead British Youth for Christ. We remain so grateful for the support and prayers from St. Johns, it means so, so much to us!

Prayer points –

1. Wisdom for Neil in leading Youth for Christ as there are many new and exciting opportunities, we just need guidance on what to embark on and what to hold back from in this season
2. While we have forward momentum on the work of Youth for Christ, we have seen a decline in funding. Please would you pray for God's continued faithfulness to the ministry of Youth for Christ so we can continue to grow our impact in the lives of many young people across the nation
3. For the family particularly Joy, Lucy and Maisey with their various studies, and for Molly who is now applying for university next year.

St John's Mission Newsletter

Reaching out at home and overseas

Mission Sunday 6th February 2022



Go and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you

Matthew 28:18-20



Greenwich Street Pastors - Update by Christine Legg

It is now eight months since we resumed our 'soft' patrols since lockdown. We go out for a couple of hours from 7pm – 9pm, instead of 9pm – 1 am and perhaps our times will change as needs change. Woolwich is getting busier with new restaurants, pop-up vans and even an open-air cinema. There are still a few homeless that we meet and some people who want to talk and we are building relationships with those we meet on a regular basis GSP patrol the streets of Woolwich on Friday Nights.

We remain a force for good on the streets as we are there to Care, Listen and Help. We can help in situations where other organisations are seen as threatening. We are usually able to assist people in a number of practical ways, providing space blankets, water, snacks and in colder weather, gloves, socks and hats. Giving out information on how to access the Food bank and WSUP. For many, just stopping and having a conversation helps them feel less lonely and know that someone cares about them.

We are pleased that Eustace from Ascension Trust will be speaking about Street Pastors at both the morning services on 6th February 2022.

If you are interested in knowing more about being a Street Pastor, caring, listening and helping people, please speak to Christine Legg, Valerie Lester or Philip Landergan.

For your prayers we would ask:

- Please pray for all of our Greenwich Street Pastors; for those who have been in self- isolation; for those still working (some of whom are key workers) and those working from home. Our numbers are low since Lockdown, please pray that people will express an interest in the work of GSP and join us for an evening as an observer, to find out what it is like.
- Please pray for all the small business owners in Woolwich who have been forced to close – we pray that they will be able to rebuild their businesses in time and we pray for their families.
- Please pray for the homeless we meet, that the Council will soon be able to help them with accommodation.
- Please pray for those who are lonely, that through conversations they come to know God's love for them. Please pray for those who have been made redundant.

Rachel & Bene Medhurst - Hebron School, Ooty, India

After many months of heavy rain last year, we are enjoying some lovely sunshine to kick start the new term here at Hebron School, and the start of our second year living in India. We had a wonderful 4 weeks in the UK over Christmas and enjoyed spending precious time with family and friends after a year apart. It was lovely to come to St John's a couple of times and see many of you. Our plans were a little paired back by the rise of Covid cases over Christmas though, and the fact that all five of us joined the statistic of Londoners with Covid at the end of December - thankfully only with mild symptoms!

We arrived back in India just as cases were rocketing again here and once again we are teaching online and the school campus is empty other than the staff and our children. This has been a disappointing start to the term as we were due to finally welcome back a number of students who haven't been able to return during the first and second 're-openings' and have been online constantly since March 2020. Thank goodness this time it's looking like it's only going to be a very short lockdown, and we are hoping and praying that all the students will return by mid-February. We are especially looking forward to seeing the dormitory that we look after filling up with the 23 teenage boys for whom we serve as loco parentis during term time.

God has given us the word 'sustainable' for this year and we are aware that as life continues to be unpredictable, we need to seek His wisdom every day to live and work in a way that is sustainable for our family. Working in a context where resources are stretched and the school remains understaffed, it would be easy to try to fix / do / be everything all at the same time... setting us on a sure path towards burnout! We are so happy to have the assurance that God has brought us here for 'such a time as this', but we are determined to pace ourselves to work within His all-knowing parameters, rather than defaulting to our natural propensity to stay in the fast lane all the time!

Prayer & Praise points:

1. Thanks for a wonderful time in the UK over Christmas.
2. Thanks that the current school closure is hopefully coming to an end.
3. Prayers for a positive start to physical lessons and dorm life, and for all of our students to be able to return.
4. Prayers for the school community to stay well (and open!) throughout the coming months.
5. For the parents of some of our students doing ministry in difficult and dangerous parts of Asia.
6. For more staff applications to fill the gaps.

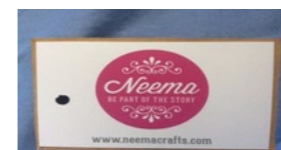
For God to give us wisdom to serve at a pace that is sustainable.



London City Mission

Please pray for our online Winter Conference 7-9 February, 10am - 1pm as we think Biblically and practically about making disciples on council estates.

We are now recruiting for next year's Pioneer Scheme. The scheme provides 2 years training for would be evangelists from disadvantaged backgrounds. They will have a day of lectures, a day working in one of our mission teams and a day in their own churches pioneering outreach work.



Neema Crafts, Iringa Tanzania, Update by Ben & Katy Ray

We're doing well thanks, even after the omicron variant did its worse over Christmas. It spread very quickly as it did in the UK - this has been the first time people have had rapid flow tests to test themselves here. Katy's parents were with us for Christmas and her mum got it. Fortunately, she wasn't too bad with it, but it did cause a great deal of additional stress about them getting back with all the PCR testing!

We are now looking to coming back on furlough from mid-May until mid-August and will probably home school Zaki (8) and Alessia (6) for their second summer term. We think we may have found somewhere to stay in Bristol, but we would still be open to something suitable in SE London if anything becomes available!

In terms of prayer requests:

- Praise God that the latest wave of Corona has now swept through without any of our staff getting too ill
- Praise God for His faithfulness to Neema Crafts throughout this world crisis and that He's enabled our artisans to remain in business.
- Praise God that the new shop in Dar has allowed us to electrify 42 homes for people with disabilities, support 5 people with mobility aids and prostheses and even build a small bridge to make life easier for Julius and his family to cross the 'korongo' outside his house
- We hope to finalise the appointment of a Christian couple from the US in their late 20s for the position of centre manager/s as we anticipate a move to Arusha in September to continue our work there and broaden our impact. Please do pray that they are the right people to fill this position and Neema can continue to go from strength to strength.
- Praise God for Ally our deaf cafe manager who was baptised in the local river a few years back. He was recently confirmed with his fiancée and married the same day!
- Please pray for the countless deaf and disabled people across Tanzania who are often excluded



Japanese Fresh Expressions – Simon & Minako Hall

Since our last update, the Japanese Anglican Church (South East London) has continued its work through the main monthly meetings. For more than two years our face-to-face meetings at St Hugh's Bermondsey have been online Zoom meetings. We have gained two new members over that period. Our focus on Bible study during these lockdown months saw us finish the whole of Luke's Gospel and we will soon complete a study of the Book of Daniel. When the time is right, we look forward to once again meeting in person. The fortnightly meetings here at St John's Blackheath continue online, looking at the Japanese bible together. Using Mark's Gospel, we have gone through the topics covered by the 'New Look at Jesus' course. Minako has stepped up to become the leader of the welfare sub-group of one of the Japanese Organisations in the UK, helping to make new connections with the Japanese community. Minako has started a theology course at St Augustine's College as part of the training for Licenced Lay Pioneer in Southwark Diocese. With the help of others inside and outside of the diocese, we have been planning the upcoming meeting with the Japanese delegation during this year's Lambeth Conference. Our aim is to talk about the possibility for Fresh Expressions to be established in the church in Japan.

Please remember us in your prayers:

- for the leaders to be equipped as servants of God
- for a member of the group who is coming closer to faith in Christ
- for the plans for Lambeth this summer
- for reaching out to Japanese people who have not yet acknowledged Christ as their saviour."



**Sports Chaplaincy UK,
Matt Baker, National Director for England**

twitter @gambettola68 and Sports Chaplaincy UK @sportchaplaincy

Chaplaincy at Charlton continues to be well received and encouraging. I get on well with the manager, Johnnie Jackson, who I've known for a number of years and he and his backroom staff are very welcoming of the role. Pre match prayers have continued this season and have been well attended with up to 6 from the first team squad on occasions. Just before Christmas the programme editor did a 5 page special on my role which you can read here <https://sportschaplaincy.org.uk/matt-baker-article-from-cafc/>

There was also a 20 minute podcast which the Church of England supported on *The Church & Football* which has interviews with several at the club on the men's and women's side of the game. <https://directory.libsyn.com/episode/index/id/21342203>

Please pray for ongoing favour for chaplaincy at all levels at Charlton and for the 3 chaplains there, me, Gareth & Kathryn, that we would have the capacity to continue to offer support. Entering 2022, at a national level I am hoping and praying that sport will continue to open up and particularly that chaplains will be allowed back in at clubs and sports where the pandemic has prohibited this. Over the last 12 months we have trained a further 145 chaplains through our online induction but the challenge now is to place them up and down the country. We are planning to hold our annual conference this year in Bolton with chaplains able to be physically present for the first time since 2019.

- Pray for all chaplains to be welcomed back again in their clubs/sports and to be able to function fully in offering pastoral & spiritual support
- Please pray that we will be able to place the many chaplains trained over the last year
- Pray for chaplains to be found for clubs & sports that have vacancies, e.g. I am still looking for a chaplain for Blackheath Rugby Club
- **We have begun discussions with the Premier League, Football League & Professional Footballers' Association regarding a new contract from 1st August. Please pray for favour as without this it will have ramifications not just for my role but the whole of Sports Chaplaincy UK**



Following Jesus where the need is greatest, Update by Ann Hill

Lebanon: Every month the economic and political situation in Lebanon worsens. The electricity supply is routinely cut off as there is no fuel for generation: this also has knock-on effects on the water supply. Rapid inflation means many families struggle even to buy basic foods. Syrian refugees account for nearly a quarter of Lebanon's total population, which is the highest proportion of refugees anywhere in the world. Tearfund has been working in Lebanon in response to the refugee crisis since 2013. Peacebuilding and reconciliation are key parts of their work as well as responding to the Beirut Port explosion and the Covid-19 pandemic, and creating job opportunities and skills training for young people.

Tigray: The crisis in the Tigray region of Ethiopia is relentless. The fighting, which started in November 2020, has left thousands dead and more than 2 million people have fled their homes. The UN states that Tigray is suffering famine with 80% of the population in need of food aid. It is difficult for Tearfund and other humanitarian organisations to access rural areas due to ongoing violence, road blocks, and a wave of atrocities. No convoys from the World Food Programme have reached Tigray since mid-December and no fuel for humanitarian operations has been allowed into Tigray since August.

Please pray for:

- Lebanese families, that their needs will be met as they face the impact of the economic crisis
- Syrian refugee families, that they will receive compassion and care, and have hope for the future an end to violence in the Tigray region and that food reaches communities urgently wisdom and strength for Tearfund's local partners in Lebanon and Tigray as they respond to new needs.

Eden Team @ Beacon Church Blackpool – Matt & Hannah Lockwood

Over the past 6 months we have seen God at work in ways that we wouldn't have even imagined. Since moving up to Blackpool in July we, along with our team & Beacon Church family, have planted a new congregation on a Sunday afternoon and started a 'Stay & Play' for parents and pre-school children. We've completed Park Run nearly every week with people from our community. Provided 8 washing machines, 5 sets of school uniform, 5 fridge freezers and a load of other things to people in urgent need. Run a free Christmas Cafe with crafts, gifts and hot chocolate mountains. Put on a Nativity led by one of the dad's in the community. And handed out 200 bags of hope across Revoe as part of 'Love Christmas'. It's been busy!

But amongst all of the projects what isn't seen is the formation of genuine friendships with people in our community. It's the text message asking for a chat when someone is struggling with their mental health. The brew & bacon barm ready to be shared while digging into the Bible and praying together. The family who had never been into church before, other than for funerals, finding home and belonging. It's the locks being fixed on a neighbour's front door that stop people walking in. It's all the little stories of hope and miracles we get to see and be part of each day. There is loads we would love to share with you. If you'd like to receive our newsletter email hannah@beaconblackpool.co.uk and we'll add you to our mailing list.

- ♦ Thank God for this amazing blessings - pray for us we think about what this next year may look like / where to focus.
- ♦ Thank God for our team (Heather, Lughton, Annie, Erin & Alex) - pray for us as we learn & minister together.
- ♦ Thank God for our new home. Pray that it will be a place of welcome for everyone who comes in.
- ♦ Pray that God would continue to strengthen our marriage and that we'd grow together.
- ♦ Pray that we are able to balance work & home life.
- ♦ Pray that in all things we'd look to God first and rely on Him.



Greenwich Youth For Christ, Director Joe Crisp-Hihn

1 Cor 15:58 So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless. We are really excited about how God is moving in the lives of young people in the borough. We do not always see

huge strides forward and dramatic overnight transformation in young people's lives, yet through consistent support, encouragement, and providing a Godly presence we can and do see small changes in their lives. Sometimes it is not until months or even years later that you learn of the importance of the work you were doing. A young person who had been mentored 4 years ago, messaged recently to say; "I can honestly say that you had such a positive impact on my life, I cannot thank you enough. Not to be dramatic, but I could have died and missed all the amazing things that have happened since, and it made all the difference having someone I could trust and talk to when things got tough." So we continue to work enthusiastically, trusting that the Lord uses our efforts to bear fruit in young people's lives, even if we don't always see or know about it. We continue to partner with local churches providing safe spaces for young people to engage with each other, be heard and ask difficult questions about Life and Faith.

Greenwich Youth For Christ are undergoing some changes due to retirement of Trustees and the upcoming closure of Onespace, yet we are trusting God to continue to hold the organisation and lead us into the next season ahead. Please pray for

- The recruitment process to find new Trustees
- We find the right place to be based, with the lease at Onespace due to end in April.
- We can strengthen and grow a diverse team of volunteers.
- Please pray for The two new groups launched at St James Kidbrooke, a Tuesday after school drop in and Sundays@4 a youth group where young people can explore and grow their faith, we are running Youth Alpha this term.
- Pray for our 3 LCM Pioneer Students, that they would continue to build meaningful relationships with young people and grow in their confidence and youth work practice.