

Lifelines

Good News for Exeter

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Summer 2021

Serving the city in the midst of pandemic...

TAKING LOVE, HEALING AND HOPE TO THE STREETS

DOZENS of Christians from many different Exeter churches are taking to the city's streets to share God's love and offer help, hope and healing.

During the pandemic many Exeter churches have been providing practical support for individuals and families who have been struggling with COVID and all the restrictions. Initiatives such as the Hot Food Project and Exeter Foodbank have been a life-line for vulnerable people and families.

Meanwhile, on the city's streets - when restrictions have allowed - three different groups are making an impact.

Exeter Street Pastors has more than 60 volunteers who patrol the streets late at night and into the early hours of the morning at weekends to offer help, support and advice.

Welcome sight

Exeter Street Pastors listen and care, clear broken glass, hand out flipflops and water, and help people get home safely on Friday and Saturday nights.

They have become a familiar and welcome sight on the city centre streets and are preparing to step up their work when all restrictions are lifted.

Another group called **Street Chaplains** work with the homeless, street sleepers and other vulnerable members of society. This was particularly important during the pandemic when determined efforts were made to offer additional support and help.

Members of **Love the Street church** have for a number of years been praying for people on the streets - and witnessed many people being healed.

Read more about all their work inside this edition.



Making the headlines...



Former bank boss Paul Morrish has a real heart for the city's homeless

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Meet the couple behind Love the Street church

SEE INSIDE

Cancer victim Luke's inspiring story of courage and faith



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Exeter's Josh Key talks about his football - and his faith

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Forgiveness and God's unfailing love saved our marriage - see page 11



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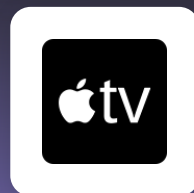
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Former bank chief Paul Morrish has real heart for the homeless

FORMER BANKER Paul Morrish rubbed shoulders with sports stars, celebrities and royalty during his successful career with one of the high street banks - but these days he spends as much time as he can helping the homeless on the streets of Exeter.

Paul is a committed Christian and part of the present hierarchy at Exeter Network Church (ENC), which focuses much of its work on the needs of the poor and vulnerable in the community.

He is also director and co-founder of a wealth management company which employs 600 people in offices across the UK, handling £8 billion worth of client investments. Paul has bought 56 companies in seven years to help build that business.

A passionate Exeter City supporter he was appointed to the club's board in 2006 and helped deliver the business plan which saw the Grecians regain Football League status in 2009. He is currently a non-executive director of the club and also several local businesses.

Street Chaplains

Away from the worlds of business and football, Paul is also a key member of Street Chaplains in Exeter and led teams during the pandemic in helping the homeless who were temporarily housed at the Great Western Hotel.

Paul said: "We visited the hotel during the week and particularly on Sundays and just built relationships with the people who were staying there. Through sharing who Jesus is and what He has done, we saw a number of those men and women come to faith in Jesus and step into a place of hope.

"We built some great relationships as a result and now that many of them are back on the streets we do a walking version of our outreach to them. I try to go out three or four times a week to see them if I can."

Part of Paul's work at ENC also involves a project called Hungry, which provides a walk-in breakfast on Sundays for the homeless and those on the margins of society at Sidwell Street Methodist Church. It was suspended during the pandemic but was relaunched again in May this year.

Paul said: "It's all about community and relationships. It's about building that bridge from hopelessness back to hope. We have seen that showing care and compassion for people's situation builds trust, which in turn deepens relationships."

Paul, 55, was brought up in a Christian family in Exeter and committed his life to Jesus at the age of nine at an evangelical crusade held at Whipton Showground. "I still have the little bible I was given at the time as well as the card I signed to show that I had given my life to the Lord."

On leaving school Paul went to Bradford University to study Economics and French - and was totally unprepared for life as a student. "I had led a



"My own faith journey has clearly shown me that God has a plan for each and every one of us. Our life is never too hopeless"

After university he joined Barclays graduate training programme and was posted to Monte Carlo where he was part of the team that established Barclays Private Banking, aimed at wealthy clients.

"I had no clients, so I had to go out and find them," said Paul. "I visited Princess Stephanie's house and met so many celebrities and famous sports stars during that time. It taught me a lot about the pointlessness of money and wealth. There was a huge amount of emotional and human void there. A lot of people led a pretty vacuous existence."

Paul, who is married with two grown up daughters, spent a total of 17 years with Barclays, ending up as managing director of its retail division. He also looked after Barclays sponsorship of the Premier League at the time.

People before profit

He then moved back to Exeter in 2005 and set up his own consultancy business, eventually joining forces with someone introduced to him by an Exeter businessman and friend to create Succession Wealth, which is now the UK's largest independent wealth management and financial planning business.

Paul's Christian values and ethos have been central to his business and personal life. He views the workplace as a place to glorify God and recognises the importance of putting purpose and people before profit.

He dedicates much of his time in supporting and mentoring young people and helping them to see the path to achieving their full potential in life.

Paul added: "My own faith journey has clearly shown me that God has a plan for each and every one of us. Our life is never too hopeless. Our calling as Christians is to make God's love a reality for those that don't know Him and declare what He has done through Jesus Christ that makes Him so worthy of living for."



Paul supporting Exeter

Paul Morrish - making God's love a reality

pretty sheltered life until then - I had never been in a pub nor experienced the excesses of student life."

But it was while at university in Bradford that Paul came to a turning point in his life - and his faith journey. A keen footballer, he was among the crowd on the fateful day in May 1985 when the main stand at Valley Parade caught fire. A total of 56 people died and more than 250 were injured.

Horrific scenes

Paul said: "I went along to enjoy a football match and ended up witnessing horrific scenes of people on fire and literally dying in front of me.

"Later that day and still in a state of profound shock, I remember thinking about the fact that my grandmother died earlier that year and I was too up myself to go to the funeral. I suddenly realised that death was real and you can tomfool your way through life but at some point - and not of your own choosing - you are going to meet your end.

"It was a huge wake up call and I started to grapple with the big things of life, like who am I and what am I going to stand for."

Valued role of Exeter's Street Pastors

VOLUNTEERS from churches across Exeter and beyond have been helping vulnerable people at risk on the city's streets for 12 years.

Exeter Street Pastors were launched in 2009 and in the ensuing years they have helped literally hundreds of people who were unwell or at risk.

Dishing out lollies, flip-flops, water, help and offering a listening ear, Street Pastors have become a familiar and welcome site in Exeter.

Working in teams of three or four they cover a large part of the city centre, from Fore Street at the bottom of town up to Summerland Street at the top and from South Street and the Cathedral Green to Central Station.

Teams normally patrol from 10.30pm to 3am on Fridays and Saturdays, although during the pandemic in 2020 this was greatly reduced. In 2019 - the last full year of activity - teams distributed over 800 bottles of water, nearly 600 pairs of flip-flops, administered first aid to over 30 people and had nearly 500 significant conversations with groups and individuals.

In the same year they picked up nearly 6,000 bottles, cleared up over 800 broken bottles and also retrieved drugs and a weapon. Their assistance was called on by the police on seven occasions, more than 80 times by door staff and 37 times by members of the public.

Supporting the Street Pastors as they patrol are Prayer

Pastors who pray for the teams and the city, also responding to specific requests for prayer from the teams.



Diane Hurst, co-ordinator for Exeter Street Pastors said: "We currently have over 60 Street Pastors and Prayer Pastors and each year run intensive training programmes for new volunteers. We never send teams out onto the streets unless we have Prayer Pastors at base covering their activities in prayer.

"We work closely with Exeter City Council, Devon & Cornwall Police and the city's bars and clubs to ensure there is a consistent and co-ordinated approach to what we do."

Dave Poulson, a youth worker in Crediton, was one of the first volunteers to train as a Street Pastor. He spent nine years going onto the streets, before becoming the administrator for the work.

He said: "As a Christian I felt it was an extremely valuable thing to do and

a good way to put my faith into practice. Helping others and giving advice and support when needed is so important in our society these days.

"When Street Pastors were launched in Exeter I think some people thought we would be chastising them for drinking too much or trying to convert them. But we were able to demonstrate that we would not be judgemental in any way and were simply there to help when needed.

"Nowadays we are well received on the streets and get lots of positive and encouraging comments from people when they are having a night out in Exeter."

To find out more about Street Pastors and the volunteering opportunities available visit www.streetpastors.org/locations/exeter or email exeter@streetpastors.org.uk

TALES FROM THE STREETS

HERE ARE some of the reports Exeter Street Pastors have recorded over the years:

"We were called to a young man lying on the floor leading us to spend some time with him. At first to support him physically as he sobered a little, then to listen as he unburdened himself. After a while and with prayer support, he was well enough to take a taxi home, very grateful and a little happier!"

"Walking up the High Street, a young man stopped us and gave us a mobile phone he had found on the street. We said we would hand it to the police and then came across a distraught young girl who had lost her phone. She confirmed that the phone we had was hers and couldn't have been more grateful - it was truly a God-sent moment!"

"Our first call was from a bar, not somewhere we always head to regularly, to help a young lady who had managed to injure her big toe. It was looking very swollen but she was keen that this wasn't going to cut short her evening out. We gave her some flip-flops and she carried on her way."

"At the end of the night we were called by door-staff to a young woman they were concerned about. We came across her curled up in a ball nearby. We started to minister to her when a young chap arrived saying that she was his girlfriend and attempting to get to her. When we prevented this he started to get verbally abusive toward us. He continued to try to get to her and we continued to prevent him. Prayer was requested so no surprise when a police unit just happened to be passing and stopped to help us. He continued his verbal assault but now directed it at the police, which led to the inevitable arrest and he was put in the back of a police van.

"We then were able to deal with the young woman who did recover enough to explain that she had no idea who the chap was. The door-staff said he had met her at the bar and bought her drinks and that 'he got her in that state'. Who knows what would have happened to that young lady if we had not been there to help."

A LIFE-CHANGING experience in Mozambique led to a Christian couple from Exeter pioneering a prophetic prayer and healing ministry in the city.

David and Chloe Frederick spent three months at Harvest School of Missions in the African country in 2012 and returned to the UK with a fresh desire to see God's love and power on the city's streets.

Harvest School of Missions, which is run by Iris Global, is a humanitarian organisation headed up by the noted Christian missionary Heidi Baker. They help equip Christians from around the globe to share the love of God with the poor, lonely and forgotten members of society.

God's power at work

David said: "We saw many miracles of healing during our time in Mozambique as people were prayed for. We always knew that God can and does heal, but had seen very little of that in person.

"It was utterly life-changing for us and we wanted to see the power of God working - particularly in outreach in the community," he added.

In 2013 the couple moved to Exeter from Norfolk where David was the curate in an Anglican parish. They connected with the Exeter Network Church and soon after planted their own house church with the name of Love the Street.

"Our vision was to go out onto the streets and pray for people and to see God's power working in them through healing," said David.

David's links with Exeter had been established when he trained with the Royal Marines at Lympstone more than 20 years before. After five years in the Marines, he joined the Halo Trust, the charity involved in the clearance of landmines. He spent seven years with the charity, four of which were in Cambodia and Angola.

David had committed his life to Jesus as a teenager, but his faith had blown hot and cold in the ensuing years.

"While I was working for the Halo Trust I started to think about what life was all about," said David. "I felt I couldn't pray with conviction because of the way I was living my life, but God was definitely stirring something in me."

He relocated to Scotland in 2003, still working for the

Modern-day miracles of healing...



David and Chloe Frederick

Halo Trust. "Most of my time was then behind a desk and I became bored with the way things were. I had joined a great church in Edinburgh, helping to run Alpha courses, and this led me to start praying about what to do next.



"I had always wanted to be involved in outreach so decided to study at the London School of Theology and then became a curate at Cromer in Norfolk, which is where my wife and I met. "A big shift for us was some

training from Mark Marx, the founder of an organisation called Healing on the Streets. What I had not come across before was the concept of praying with authority and commanding things to happen rather than just asking God to heal. It was about seeking to follow Jesus in doing what He did, the way He did it. He never asked the Father to heal - He just commanded.

"Mark's training totally changed the way I prayed," said David. "I started to see remarkable things happen. The first occasion was when a man who had come to repair some fencing at our home slipped on wet leaves and fell heavily. I asked him if I could pray for him and he agreed. As I prayed with the authority of the Holy Spirit all the pain - some which he had suffered for many years - left him.

"He had experienced the power of God flow through him and been healed in the process."

Love the Street as a church has never involved more than 20 people - but its impact has been felt many times in the city.

Amazing things happen

Members join together on Sunday morning for a time of worship and prayer, and then during the week go onto the streets in pairs and approach individuals and groups to ask if anyone would like prayer for healing.

"We have seen all sorts of amazing things happen as a result," said David, "and this increased our confidence and faith in what God could and would do."

Over the years David and the rest of his church have witnessed many instances of God's healing power.

"One memorable occasion was when we met a group of students. One of them had a big bump on his head so we asked one of his friends to pray for him," said David.

"The group had been fooling around and he had been hit on the head with a cricket bat. After his friend prayed the bump literally just disappeared - he just started jumping up and down and shrieking. He was struggling to grasp what had just happened.

"Another time we saw a large lump on a man's leg completely disappear after we prayed for healing," he added.

"We have seen scars disappear, eyesight restored, pain relieved and so much more - thanks to God's love and power."

For more information visit www.lovethestreet.org

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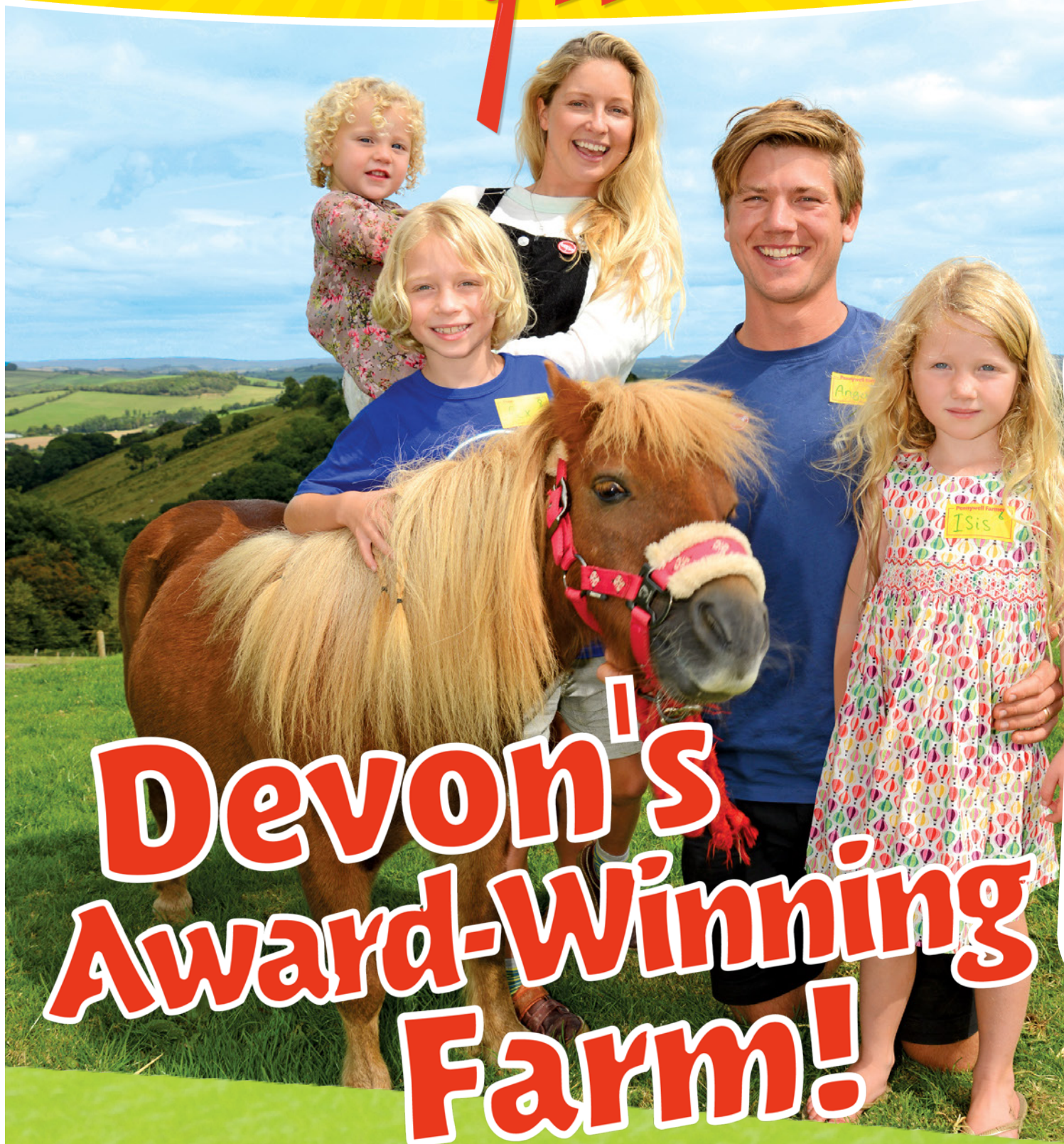
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Doctors told rare cancer victim Luke to prepare for death - but God had other plans for him!



Luke pictured with mum Diana and dad Mark

AN EXETER FATHER'S battle against a rare and potentially deadly form of cancer has developed into an inspiring story of courage, faith and trust in God's purposes for his life.

Luke Jeffery was 44 when, in August 2019, he was diagnosed with neuroendocrine cancer which was affecting his pancreas.

Luke had felt generally unwell for a couple of years with fatigue and various aches and pains - but he just put it down to being middle-aged.

But the onset of some unusual symptoms affecting his digestive system led Luke to talking to his parents Mark and Diana about the situation. "I wasn't sure if it was serious enough to warrant an emergency appointment," said Luke. "But my parents took me straight to the walk-in clinic at the Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital where a scan identified a tumour measuring nearly 10cms in my pancreas."

Luke was immediately admitted to hospital where his condition worsened. His bile duct wasn't flowing and he was in a lot of pain and jaundiced. There were other worrying symptoms which caused the doctors concern.

Eventually after further tests and diagnosis, doctors decided that surgery was not possible and started palliative care, given the life-threatening nature of Luke's cancer.

Very angry

"It was a real shock," said Luke who is a committed Christian. "It didn't seem right as I had been praying and listening to God through all this time and He had not told me that I should prepare to die."

"At first I was very angry: I wanted to know why God had not revealed this to me. But the second thing that came over me was an incredible peace because I suddenly realised that in all the things that God had been speaking to me about He had not brought it up, so He wasn't worried. He knew what I was going through - He wasn't telling me there's a problem you need to worry about."

It was at this point that Luke's case was taken on

by one of the world leaders in the treatment of Luke's type of cancer, who had just joined the oncology team at the RD&E.

"She told me that they could not operate because of the size and position of the tumour and recommended a three month course of chemotherapy," said Luke. However, he suffered serious infections during the treatment and had to be rushed into hospital on a number of occasions.

There was real concern that Luke was not going to survive, but at the end of the treatment they found the tumour had not shrunk, but its growth had been halted.

It was a time of real turmoil and concern for Luke's parents, his daughters and four brothers and sister - all of whom were praying for Luke to recover. Other family members and friends were also praying for Luke to survive.

Everything had changed suddenly and dramatically for Luke and his two daughters when he was diagnosed with cancer. They had to move out of their rented home in Cranbrook because Luke was too ill to work and also took the decision to close the

Christian publishing business which he ran.

Luke's father Mark had to take on the task of closing the business while both Mark and his wife Diana took on the mantle of parenting for the girls as Luke was still unwell and could barely talk at times.

There was a dramatic turning point when Diana - who had been praying constantly for her son - had a dream during which God told her that He wanted to heal Luke.

Luke said: "My spirit literally jumped when mum told me about the dream. It has affected the way I have prayed and moved forward. I had to accept what was going on in my body, but at the same time I was praying that God would make His will clear to me and that the Holy Spirit would give me peace."

Although extremely weak and self-isolating he was able to spend Christmas with his parents and other family members at their home in Rockbeare. "We were all very happy that I was still alive, because the initial diagnosis was that I had a very short time to live," said Luke.

In the early part of 2020, his specialist discussed Luke's situation with surgeons at Derriford Hospital in

"It was a real shock...it didn't seem right as I had been praying and listening to God through all this time and He had not told me that I should prepare to die"



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Fearful or wo

You may not like the political party that's in power, but you're much better off than the Jewish people Jesus was speaking to in Matthew Chapter 6.

Their country was occupied by the Romans, and they paid extortionate taxes to keep them in power. They lived as slaves so they worried a lot.

Then Jesus came along and said: 'Look at the birds. They don't plant...harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are? Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?' (Matthew Chapter 6 v26-27).

e of a devastating cancer diagnosis...



Luke pictured in intensive care after surgery and (below) with his mum



Plymouth and it was decided to operate and remove the tumour on his pancreas. However, during scans they had also identified another possible small tumour on his liver.

Luke added: "They decided it would be best for me to have the operation even though it would be risky. The risks seemed greater if they did nothing. I was made aware of the risks, but the odds were in my favour and they felt it would give me the chance to live longer and have a better lifestyle."

10 hour operation

Luke was in the operating theatre for 10 hours, during which time surgeons removed the tumour and part of the pancreas. They also removed his gall bladder as well as parts of his stomach and bile duct. At one stage he nearly died during the procedure and had to have three blood transfusions.

After a two-week stay in hospital recovering Luke returned home and spent the rest of 2020 recovering as best as he could during the pandemic.

"The consultant told me that they couldn't do anything to completely cure the cancer but she felt that I had a life expectancy of several years," said Luke.

Although still weak and on medication to help his digestion he was able to re-start the publishing business and work on a limited hours basis and even

think about buying a house for himself and the girls.

Luke added: "About 18 months ago I was put on artificial enzymes to help with my digestion due to the pancreas having been significantly reduced in size.

"I was told I would have to take these for the rest of my life, and two months ago I needed 25 tablets per day. Then God gave me faith to come off this medication. I have been doing it gradually and am now down to five tablets per day. Nonetheless, there are no signs of malnutrition – my weight has actually gone up, my energy levels have increased and I feel stronger. My aim is to completely stop the medication."

However, earlier this year there was another setback for Luke. Further tests had revealed that there was still part of the tumour remaining on the pancreas as well as the tumour on the liver.

With more chemotherapy ruled out, Luke underwent a course of radiotherapy treatment in Bristol, with plans to burn off the tumour on the liver later this year.

Now 46, Luke is praying for God to show him what He has planned for him in the future. "Time and time again in my life God has taken things that seemed impossible and He has worked it through and enabled me to achieve the impossible," he said.

"These last two years or so have confirmed that and I am standing in faith for healing."

ried - look at the birds!

In other words, if you worry a lot – try bird watching! Birds don't know where their next meal is coming from, yet you never see one sitting on a branch having an anxiety attack. So here's the question: 'Aren't you far more valuable to God than they are?'

A man who was out of work, despondent, and worried about feeding his family noticed some birds eating strawberry shortcake from a bin. All at once it dawned on him – 'If God can feed the birds strawberry shortcake, surely He can take care of me too!'

Even if you suffer from a poor self-image and

think you're not worth taking care of, aren't you still more valuable than a bird?

So look at how well your heavenly Father takes care of them, and remind yourself that He will take care of you too. If anxiety is robbing you of happiness during the day and sleep at night, make up your mind to live by this Scripture: 'Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you' (1 Peter 5 v7).

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Learning how to Thrive - virtually!

MILLIONS of people in Britain have been turning to the internet and phone apps to take part in religious worship during lockdown, new figures reveal.

Research by the Church of England shows that clips and content from its online services have notched up

more than 40 million views since COVID restrictions on public gatherings were introduced, reports the Daily Mail.

More than 20,000 regular services and other virtual events are now listed on the 'A Church Near You' page on its website, compared with none a year ago.

Meanwhile, 54 national ceremonies have been viewed on 3.4 million occasions and the Church's Daily

Prayer app was accessed 4.4 million times - a rise of 55 per cent on the previous year.

Religious leaders say the pandemic has provided the Church with a 'digital coming of age' and online services are expected to remain a regular feature even as worshippers return to the pews.

Churches and chapels of all denominations across the UK introduced online worship via Facebook, You

Tube and Zoom as a response to the first lockdown last spring, when all places of worship were forced to shut by the Government.

According to the survey by the Church of England, more than 4,200 vicars and church leaders have taken part in online training courses in the last year so that they can use digital technology to broadcast services.

St David's Church in Exeter has taken advantage of online opportunities with the launch of Thrive - an hour long interactive session on Sunday afternoons.

It has attracted a regular following by dozens of people each week, most of whom are from Exeter, but some much further afield. Thrive is aimed at regular churchgoers as well as people who are new to church and those who are seeking answers to some of life's big questions, especially during the pandemic.

The impact of Thrive was featured on BBC's Songs of Praise programme on May 16 when the Revd Ash Leighton Plom from St David's Church explained the aim of Thrive. He said: "Thrive is a gathering on Zoom where people can connect and explore concepts of spirituality and dig a little deeper into their Christianity."

Powerful stories

"Some of the most powerful stories are the people who have come from nowhere with no Christian background or perhaps they used to go to church, but have become disconnected for years. Thrive has helped them back into Christian fellowship and given them new hope."

The format involves a warm welcome and usually a quiet activity, such as reflecting on different questions which appear on screen. This is followed by an opportunity to chat with others in small breakout groups about the theme for that week's session. This informal approach as well as the opportunity to discuss issues about God and faith has proved really beneficial for many participants.

One of them, Debbie Walker, was featured in the

Continued on facing page



One of the Thrive sessions was featured on BBC's Songs of Praise

Gilead FOUNDATIONS Unlocking People: Releasing Potential

Gilead Foundations Charity offers a supported living service for women suffering from addictions, homelessness and domestic abuse on a farm near Okehampton.

The charity's main aim is to help residents develop and maintain long term stability and independence.

Support is offered to residents to develop their full potential in mind, body and spirit. We create a supportive nurturing space to enable individuals to develop, thrive and transition into a new and independent lifestyle.

Each applicant will be given the opportunity to visit and have an interview with the support staff team to assess their needs of eligibility for the course.

Residents are given opportunities to learn basic work ethics in the various practical areas such as kitchens and domestics and to have access to a variety of agricultural work experience - such as animal husbandry and general farm work including milking, horticulture and maintenance.



Learning these skills can help to equip individuals for future independence and career development.

Residents are encouraged to stay for a minimum of 12 months. Accommodation costs are covered by Housing Benefit and support and needs costs can be covered by individual benefits.

Gilead's fundraising team will work with individuals to help achieve the costs for the support and training.

Accommodation for up to eight women residents, plus support workers, is provided in a family environment in a modern, purpose designed bungalow situated on the farm.



Alana is a support worker at Gilead Foundations. This is her story.

"My journey of faith began in July 2013. I had been battling a life of addiction for many years and I had come to the end of myself and that lifestyle: you could say I had hit my rock bottom.

This is when I entered a Christian rehabilitation programme in Wales. It was definitely one of the most difficult experiences, yet it was also one of the best experiences.

Hope House, which is part of an organisation called Teen Challenge, was as it says in the name - a place of hope. I knew Jesus was who I had always been searching for and that sense of belonging, being brought into His family.

I was loved back to life and I met the one who would change my life forever: Jesus.

After finishing the programme, I became a support worker with Hope House. What an incredible honour! This was such a great season, seeing people set free and sharing the love of Christ.

Since moving on from Hope House I have been brought into the family of God in Swansea Valley Bible Church which has been such an important part in my journey. I've been living and working in my local community for a number of years and here I've been able to put my roots down and find a new and true sense of my identity in Christ.

I'm extremely thankful for another open door and the Lord has led me to be a part of the work here in Okehampton, as a support worker at Gilead Foundations. Another exciting chapter! I'm enjoying being a part of the Lord's work here as my heart is to see people set free through the love of Christ.

I'm so thankful for Lois and Ben and for the opportunity to be part of this special place. I'm also looking forward to seeing how the Lord continues to work out His purpose here. I have been enriched by the heart and vision of Ian and Bron who originally set up Gilead Foundations and I'm excited to be a part of this work."



Contact us

For more information or to arrange a visit

01837 851240

www.gilead.org.uk

admin@gilead.org.uk



Gilead Foundations Centre, Risdon Farm, Jacobstowe, Okehampton EX20 3AJ

Support us

Please consider supporting Gilead Foundations as we support our residents. Donations can be made online at

[paypal.com/fundraiser/charity/203824](https://www.paypal.com/fundraiser/charity/203824)

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Songs of Praise programme. A recovering alcoholic, she explained that when she lost her dad she took it really badly and tried to drown her feelings. "I should have died, the way I treated my body," she said. "Alcohol didn't work and it doesn't work."

She told Songs of Praise presenter Aled Jones that Thrive had helped her restore her relationship with her mum and had given her new hope for the future.

She added: "The Bible says that God will use everything that you have been through in life for His glory - so one day I can use all I have been through to help others."

Another regular participant in Thrive is Karen

Griffiths, who actually lives the best part of 50 miles away in Plymouth. She said: "I saw something on Facebook about Thrive and I clicked that I was interested. I had no idea it was from a church in Exeter, but Ash contacted me and I thought I would give it a go - and I am so glad I did."

For most of her adult life Karen had been an agnostic - a person who believes that nothing is known or can be known of the existence or nature of God. "Basically my view was that if it couldn't be scientifically proved it wasn't true. So Christianity and God were out of the question for me."

It wasn't until she was in her 40s that Karen's views started to change. She started doing holistic therapies such as reflexology and reiki.

"Things happened that I saw and felt that couldn't be scientifically explained. Looking back I was rather naive."

The next chapter in her journey of faith came about six years ago. A keen skier, Karen and her husband and daughter booked a ski-ing holiday in Austria run by a Christian travel company. "I don't like flying and

it was the only operator offering ski trips to Austria by coach," she said.

"We made it clear that we weren't Christians, but they were absolutely fine about it. I had never really met Christians before and they were wonderful. They invited us to go to the Bible studies each evening and although we didn't intend to, we decided to go along.

"I think the seeds of my Christian faith were planted at that time," said Karen. Back in Plymouth she decided to run a retail stall at the regular community market in the local Anglican church. "I got to know people who were Christians and gradually got more involved in community activities and the church.



Thrive regular Karen Griffiths

"One day it suddenly hit me that if I wasn't involved with the church there would be an empty hole in my heart. I took that as a calling and started to read the Bible and investigate Christianity.

"I realise now that all my life I had been searching for my true identity.

"What started in my head has moved to my heart and I am now planning to get involved even more and train for lay ministry. Being involved with Thrive has proved so valuable for me. It is so inclusive and refreshing. Ash has been a like a mentor to me and although I have never met him I really appreciate how he has

helped me.

"I have even helped lead one of the sessions thanks to Ash's encouragement," she added.

For details about Thrive visit www.stdavidschurchexeter.org.uk or e-mail admin@stdavidschurchexeter.org.uk

COVID-19 fears lead to surge of interest in Christianity

ACCORDING to a recent study, Christians form the biggest religious group in the world with some 2.3 billion followers - almost a third of the total global population. Research also shows that 84 per cent of people in the world identify with a religious group.

The world is getting more religious, not less - although there are significant geographical variations. Christianity is growing rapidly in South America, Africa and Asia.

By contrast Christianity is in decline in most countries in Europe in the wake of the shift towards post-Christian, secular, multicultural and multi faith societies.

In the 2011 Census, around 60 per cent of the UK population identified as Christians, although the numbers of people attending churches continues to fall sharply.

British society has changed in many ways since the Second World War - and religious change is a major example. There is much public discussion of such issues as how secular Britain really is, how religiously diverse, whether people see political and religious identities as conflicting, and how polarised religious views actually are.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a surge of interest in the Christian faith.

According to a report published by the Evangelical Alliance last year, nearly 60 per cent of UK churches surveyed reported a marked increase



in people interested in finding out more about Christianity.

The research, which surveyed almost 700 churches and 196 faith-based organisations, also showed that 70% of church leaders have reported a surge in the number of people who would not normally attend church, now attending during the lockdown.

The report went on to reveal that 88% of church leaders have said their churches are working tirelessly to meet the needs of vulnerable people struggling during the coronavirus pandemic. Of these churches, 72% are working in partnership with either local authorities, other churches or charities.

The study was conducted by the Evangelical Alliance in partnership with the charity Stewardship and Eido Research.

Evangelical Alliance UK Director, Peter Lynas said: "During the lockdowns, we have seen churches across the country adapt to the uncertain environment and speak directly to the fear and anxiety that many people are feeling throughout the UK.

"Online services are reporting huge levels of interest and thousands are engaging with church for the first time as a place of hope."

He added: "At the heart of the mission of the church is a desire to serve the marginalised, feed the hungry and be a place of refuge to those who are isolated. Through food banks and many other service provisions, churches are ensuring vulnerable individuals and families across the country receive the help they need."

Despite all we've been through, now could be a great time to remortgage your home

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*according to Nationwide Building Society as of 30/12/2020

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-55483432>



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As a mortgage/lifetime mortgage is secured against your home or property, it could be repossessed if you do not keep up the mortgage repayments.

Christian websites that may be helpful

What is life all about? Why does God allow suffering? Aren't all religions the same? Doesn't science explain everything? These are just some of the questions people frequently ask. These websites may help with the answers

www.christianityexplored.org
www.christianity.org.uk
www.peacewithgod.org.uk
www.allaboutgod.com
www.activechristianity.org
www.gotquestions.org
www.bibleinfo.com
www.findingtruepeace.com
www.solas-cpc.org
www.request.org.uk
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www.crossrhythms.co.uk
www.god.tv
www.thelife.com
www.christianity.com
www.bible-knowledge.com
www.alpha.org



Image by StockSnap from Pixabay

This simple prayer could change your life forever

Maybe you've been exploring the Christian faith for some time and realise you now need to make a decision. Perhaps you've been looking at Jesus's life, teaching and claims for a while and you know you need to respond. So how do you become a follower of Jesus?

The great news is that becoming a Christian is really easy. There is a simple prayer around three words - **SORRY, THANKS** and **PLEASE**.

*Lord Jesus Christ, I am **sorry** for the things I have done wrong in my life (take a few moments to ask his forgiveness for anything particular that is on your conscience). Please forgive me. I now turn from everything that I know is wrong.*

***Thank you** that you love me and you died on the cross for me, so that I could be forgiven and set free. Thank you that you offer me forgiveness and the gift of your Holy Spirit.*

*I now receive that gift. **Please** come into my life by your Holy Spirit to be with me forever. Thank you Lord Jesus, Amen*

If you have prayed this prayer for the first time, or if you are returning to the Lord after being absent for a time, it is best if you make contact with a church near you - see details opposite.

Churches in your area...

For information on events organised by churches across Exeter contact Christians Together Across Exeter at ctax.btck.co.uk or on ctaxexeter@gmail.com

Exeter Vineyard Church

Meeting at St.Leonards Primary School, St.Leonards Road, EX2 4NQ www.exe.vin Email hello@exe.vin Tel 01392 426060

Westgate Christian Fellowship

Bartholomew Street West, Exeter, EX4 3AJ www.westgatechristianfellowship.org.uk

St David's Church Exeter

Queen's Terrace, Exeter EX4 4HR www.stdavidschurchexeter.org.uk Email admin@stdavidschurchexeter.org.uk Tel 01392 660226 Facebook St David's Church Exeter

St Michael's, Mount Dinham

Dinham Road, Mount Dinham, Exeter, EX4 4EB EX4 4EB www.stmichaelsmountdinham.org.uk Facebook St Michael and All Angels, Mount Dinham Email chapelwardens@stmichaelsmountdinham.org.uk Tel 01392 660226

Maranatha Church

America Hall, De La Rue Road, Pinhoe, Exeter Contact Cath Whitehead, 07952 225061 or Kevin and Glo Abram 01395 267155

St Michael & All Angel's Church, Alphington

Church Rd, Alphington, Exeter EX2 8XJ www.alphingtonstmichaels.org Email admin@alphingtonstmichaels.org Tel 01392 662280

St.Matts

Lower Summerlands, Exeter, EX12LJ www.achurchnearyou.com/church/8700/ Tel 01392 248322

Unlimited Church

Mary Arches Street, Exeter, EX4 3BA. www.unlimitedchurch.org.uk Email: info@unlimitedchurch.org.uk Tel 07549 451492 (Helen's) Facebook: [@unlimitedchurchexeter](https://www.facebook.com/unlimitedchurchexeter) Instagram: [@unlimitedchurch](https://www.instagram.com/unlimitedchurch) Twitter: [@unlimitedchurch](https://www.twitter.com/unlimitedchurch)

Exeter Quakers

Wynards Lane Off Magdalen Street Exeter EX2 4HU www.swquakers.org.uk/meetings/devon/exeter Email Exeterquakers@yahoo.co.uk Tel 01392 491904 Exeter Quakers on Twitter Facebook & Instagram

Local business network, CTN is offering encouragement and support to people in the workplace

BASED IN EXETER, the Crosslink Transformation Network (CTN) aims to encourage, support and connect people in the workplace across Devon and progressively beyond in the South West region.

This could be entrepreneurs braving a start-up or established businesses as well as employees. In fact, anyone in the workplace.

CTN has brought businesspeople and workers together over the past 13 years. The network is led by Barrie Townsend and Frank Bennett who have hosted many monthly breakfast events at the Imperial and at the Toby Carvery. Lately these have had to be virtual, but the group has continued to grow despite the challenges of the pandemic.

CTN operates on Christian principles - however it is open to people of all faiths and none. "We believe God is interested in people as individuals, as well as in their work and workplace," said Barrie Townsend who was in the motor trade for most of his career.

Frank Bennett is a former police officer who believes work is so much more than a career. "Work is where we spend so many of those irreplaceable days of our

lives and where we interact with colleagues, customers, suppliers, visitors and so on," he said. "It is the centre of our economy and where we learn to develop the business, leadership, managerial, operational and social skills that help make us the person we are today and aspire to be tomorrow."

The workplace can be very challenging but also very rewarding. Whether that is working from home or at a specific location. It is a place where colleagues can become friends or where stress can isolate and overwhelm.

Readers are invited to consider becoming part of CTN and benefit from interaction with other businesspeople or employees.

"You may be a Christian who has never really thought that God is interested in your work or that spiritual things could happen outside church," said Frank. "Most of us in CTN thought that way once, but now we see things differently. We would love to hear from people in the workplace across Devon." While CTN attracts people from across the South West, it also has a special focus on Exeter's largest trading estate which you can read about in the accompanying article.

Visit www.CTNsouthwest.network for more information or email Barrie Townsend at info@CTNsouthwest.network



Calling everyone on Marsh Barton Trading Estate...



Photo: Marsh Barton geograph# 2297182 by Lewis Clarke

CROSSLINK Transformation Network (CTN) is inviting anyone working on the Marsh Barton Trading Estate to get in touch with them for encouragement, support and ongoing networking.

CTN's leaders Barrie Townsend and Frank Bennett have had a long-standing association with Marsh Barton, at one time providing 'business pastors' for the area.

"At CTN we have a heart for Marsh Barton where many thousands of people work," said Barrie, who spent over 40 years in after-sales operations of franchised car, van and truck dealerships and accident repair centres. He was based on the estate for some of those years, so understands what it is like to work there.

During his time in the police, Frank spent many hours patrolling Marsh Barton and talking to people working there. Both have been managers and leaders for a number of years and know well the joys and pressures of the workplace.

"We both recognise Marsh Barton as a vital part of the heartbeat of Exeter," said Frank. "We want to help

connect people in this important and growing location that generates vital income for our city and provides jobs for so many people."

CTN aims to encourage, support and connect people in the workplace. It is a free service aimed at helping to build relationships across different businesses. They do **not** see themselves as business advisors - such help is already available elsewhere including through government agencies.

Their focus is very much on the **person**. This interaction might be described as 'pastoral' or maybe simply put as being 'listening-ears.'

"We have found that people have a real need to talk with someone detached from the situation that maybe is currently challenging them," said Barrie. "So please make that initial contact with us and we'll be delighted to come back to you!"

If you work on Marsh Barton, in any capacity at all, whether you are an employee, supervisor, manager, director or business owner, CTN would like to hear from you.

Visit www.CTNsouthwest.network for more details or email Barrie Townsend at info@CTNsouthwest.network

'FORGIVENESS AND GOD'S UNFAILING LOVE SAVED OUR MARRIAGE'

THOUSANDS of marriages end in divorce every year in the UK and for Devon couple Peter and Jill du Feu they could have been just another of those heartbreaking statistics, but for one important factor – forgiveness.

Peter was devastated when Jill admitted that she was having an affair with an older man – and the pain was so great that his first thought was to take their three children and end it all.

They had been married for 15 years when Jill confessed to deceiving her husband – even sharing their marriage bed with the other man when Peter was not at home.

It would have been enough for most people to call time on the marriage – but as a committed Christian Peter found it in his heart to forgive Jill's infidelity.

Peter said: "It was a very hard time for us. I had noticed a change in Jill over a few months, but I didn't dream that as a Christian herself she would deceive me in this way.

"But I know we had been brought together by God and we trusted Him for our relationship. There was definitely a willingness to work through it.

Deep need

"I realised that Jill was very low down in my priorities at the time – I had a demanding job and was busy in the church, as well as having a young family. I could see that my behaviour had created the environment for the affair."

Jill admitted that there was a deep need in her for a father figure. She and her two brothers had a hard upbringing being brought up in a children's home. Fortunately Miss Champion, the housemother, was a Christian and took her to church every week. Later, having left the children's home and moved elsewhere, Jill gave her life to Jesus at the church which she then attended.

But there was more pain for Jill when she suffered shocking abuse at the hands of an adult who was someone she should have been able to trust.

She managed to escape the clutches of her abuser and met Peter at the church they both attended in Warwickshire. Their friendship grew and in obedience to God they got engaged and were married in late 1974. They went on to have three children and now have six grandchildren as well.

Outwardly their marriage was a good one. But Jill had a dark secret. She said: "My lack of self worth and longing for any sense of love and affirmation from a father left me wide open to predators, usually older men, which I suppose is natural as I was so desperately looking for a father."

She was befriended by an older man through work and what started as an innocent relationship developed into an affair and a web of deceit which lasted 18 months.

The state of their marriage deteriorated as Jill wrestled with the feelings of guilt – until by complete chance Peter discovered that she was having an affair.

Peter said: "It was a really dark time, I was absolutely broken – but thanks to God's love for us both there was a willingness to work it through. We have come to realise that there is no depth of despair, or situation so desperate, that God can't bring you out of.



Peter and Jill du Feu

"Forgiveness was the key to us moving forward. Forgiveness was not always easy as once I had forgiven it meant that I had to let go of the need to know all the details of what had happened.

"We have come to trust and respect each other. We often see things in different ways but we don't let that become a competition. There is no need to try and dominate or outdo each other. Jesus has given us the ability to forgive and love deeply."

Jill said: "We want to show that there is a way other than divorce and it is a way that is truly amazing. I feel so secure and loved by both my husband and my Heavenly Father.

"We want to encourage anyone who is going through difficulties in their marriage to get help to sort the problems out - but it needs willingness on both sides and God's redemptive love.

"We wish we hadn't had to go through the experiences that we did, but in so many ways we're glad that we did because we have learned so much about His love and transforming power and have grown so much through it."

Peter and Jill would be happy to share their story with churches and other groups that may be interested.

Please contact them by e-mail at nopittoodeep@dufe.co.uk.

Support for couples and families

CHRISTIAN-BASED charity Care for the Family offers a range of support for individuals and couples who may be facing family difficulties or a breakdown in relationships.

Motivated by their Christian faith, ethos and compassion. Care for the Family is committed to supporting families of all faiths or none with a wide range of outstanding services and resources including marriage and parenting courses and bereavement support.

Good communication can be found at the heart

of every successful relationship – but it's not always easy to communicate well. There are times when it feels harder and maybe even impossible to communicate with one's partner. Two of the most common seasons in which it can seem particularly tough to communicate well are times when there is ongoing conflict in a relationship or when couples feel they may be drifting apart.

It can be tempting to ignore the issues in the hope that they'll go away, but the reality is that it's during the hardest of times that couples need to push forward the most.

For more information visit www.careforthefamily.org.uk; visit the Facebook page or call 029 2081 0800

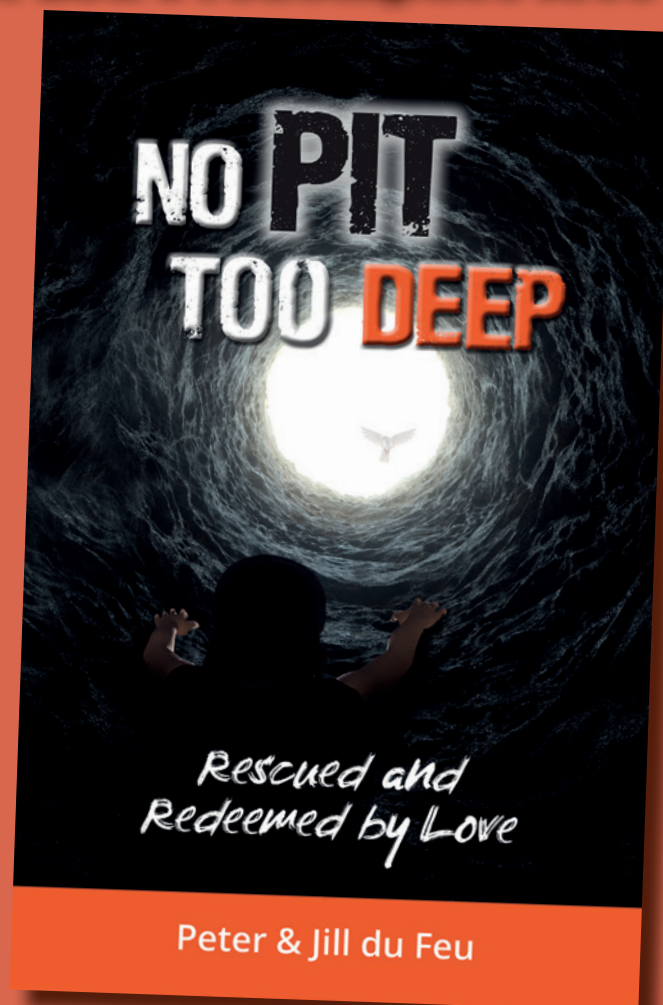
PETER AND JILL DU FEU, who live in Torquay, have shared their journey of faith and the challenges they faced in their marriage in a recently-published book called 'No Pit Too Deep - Rescued and Redeemed by Love.'

A no-holds-barred book, it is a powerful and moving story of two lives that have suffered the horrors and rejection caused by family breakdown, that has ultimately been redeemed by the grace and love of God.

It is available directly from the authors at the discount price of £8.99 by e-mailing nopittoodeep@dufe.co.uk and is also available from Amazon.

'No Pit Too Deep' is an incredible story of God's redemptive love

Told with brutal honesty and real vulnerability it highlights the life-long legacy of childhood trauma and its impact on relationships, marriage and family life. Peter and Jill's powerfully written autobiography also offers very real hope in the promises of God.



Available directly from the authors at discount price of £8.99 Email nopittoodeep@dufe.co.uk Also available from Amazon.

Exeter City star Josh Key talks about his football - and his faith



Photo courtesy Exeter F.C

TALENTED young Exeter City player Josh Key has had a sensational season for the Grecians – but he is keeping his feet firmly on the ground and not getting carried away with his success.

That's because Josh is a committed Christian who

puts his success down to the talents and gifts given to him by God.

Josh, who is 21, broke into the first team at right back at the start of the season when injuries ruled out other players – and he played more than 40 games for Exeter during the 20-21 season. He would probably have played more but was ruled out of three games around Christmas when he tested positive for COVID.

Josh said: "I played in a couple of pre-season friendlies and the manager said I had done well and I was surprised and delighted when he named me in the team for the first game of the season."

He had made his professional debut against Bristol Rovers in November 2018, coming on as a substitute in an EFL Trophy tie. He started his first full game in September last year again in an EFL Trophy tie, scoring his first senior goal against Forest Green Rovers.

His Football League debut also came in September against Salford and two weeks later he scored his first League goal, with the winner against Mansfield.

"Making my league debut was a very proud moment for me – it was just a shame that my parents and other family members couldn't be there to see it," he said.

Brought up in a Christian family Josh went to church every week, but didn't really enjoy the experience as a youngster. But inspired by a youth pastor who was 'really cool' and demonstrated an authentic faith, Josh's own faith grew and deepened.

"He was someone I could look up to and he was interested in all the same things as me. I decided to go to church regularly and by the age of 15 I had come to know the peace, joy and fullness of life that having a relationship with Jesus brings," said Josh.

God-given gifts

"I thank God for the places he has put me and the gifts that He has given me. When I play for Exeter I am doing it for God's glory, not for my own fame or success. It's something that He's placed in my life and in my heart and given me the talent to do it.

"Reading the Bible regularly has helped me understand God's heart for us and the fact that Jesus gave His life so that we can have life. My identity is in God, not in football. Footballers experience plenty of ups and downs in their careers, but for me it's not about whether I played well or not so well, I'm confident in my identity in God."

Josh said that his team-mates occasionally talk to him about his faith and want to know what 'rules' he has to follow as a Christian. "It opens up conversations, which is good," added Josh.

Josh is not only talented at football, he is also a musician and plays guitar and sings in the worship band at Rediscover Church in Exeter. "I can't make every Sunday because of away trips which can mean getting back home really late on Saturday night – but I like to take part in worship as much as I can," he said.

He comes from a sporting and talented musical family: his dad Myles played rugby for Exeter Chiefs and football for Devon while his great grandad was captain of the Irish rugby team as well as being a heavyweight boxing champion.

Josh's sisters Beth and Emillie are part of the popular folk trio Wildwood Kin, while his mum Louise is a talented singer and songwriter.

Football...Josh in action for City (above)

Faith...Josh on stage at Rediscover Church (below)



Joining Exeter City at the age of 16 was a dream come true for Josh. He had been with Torquay from the age of 11, but was snapped up by the Grecians when the Torquay Academy had to be axed because of shortage of finance. "I always wanted to play for Exeter because of their reputation for developing young players," he added.

He enjoyed plenty of success with the Under 18s and played alongside Ethan Ampadu, who was later signed by Premier League Chelsea at the age of 16. "We had a great team at the time," said Josh, "and several of them are now in Exeter's first team squad."

Josh is supported and encouraged in his faith by former Portsmouth legend Linvoy Primus, who is an ambassador for the Christian charity 'Faith & Football.' "We get together online for a Bible study every week and several other footballers who are also Christians join in as well," added Josh.

"It's always interesting and encouraging to hear from Linvoy how he dealt with the challenges of being a Christian footballer. The Portsmouth manager Harry Redknapp told him he would never play him at Portsmouth, but Linvoy decided he wasn't going to play for anyone else and eventually broke into the team and over time became a Portsmouth legend," added Josh.

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