

## West Devon Connect Magazine Autumn/Winter 09

### Supporting Pastors on Street Mission

The winter streets of Tavistock are filled with a little more understanding and pastoral care thanks to the work of some local Good Samaritans.

The Tavistock Street Pastors are church volunteers who patrol the streets during the late nights and early mornings every Saturday.

From helping people to organise their own transport home to dealing with young people under the influence of alcohol, Street Pastors aim to make people's evenings a little better – even if it's just to have a chat.

Dressed in their distinctive blue uniforms, the Christian group work from approximately 10pm until 2am and are run by a co-ordinator with support from local church groups, the police, district council and other agencies.

The Street Pastors initiative started in the London Boroughs in 2003 as a direct response to increased street crime and anti-social behaviour.

Roger Bird, of the Tavistock Street Pastors, said: "Street Pastors meet, talk and engage with people through listening, supporting and helping in practical ways. This could be walking a girl on her own to a late night taxi; reassuring someone who feels intimidated; or listening to people who need to know that somebody cares."

The scheme already operates successfully in towns across England with more than 500 fully trained pastors taking to the streets. Locally, Plymouth, Exeter, Totnes and Ilfracombe all have projects running and recent figures have shown a decrease in street crime in town centres when the Street Pastors are on patrol.

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