

GOOD NEWS

FOR NORWICH & NORFOLK

Easter 2022: FREE

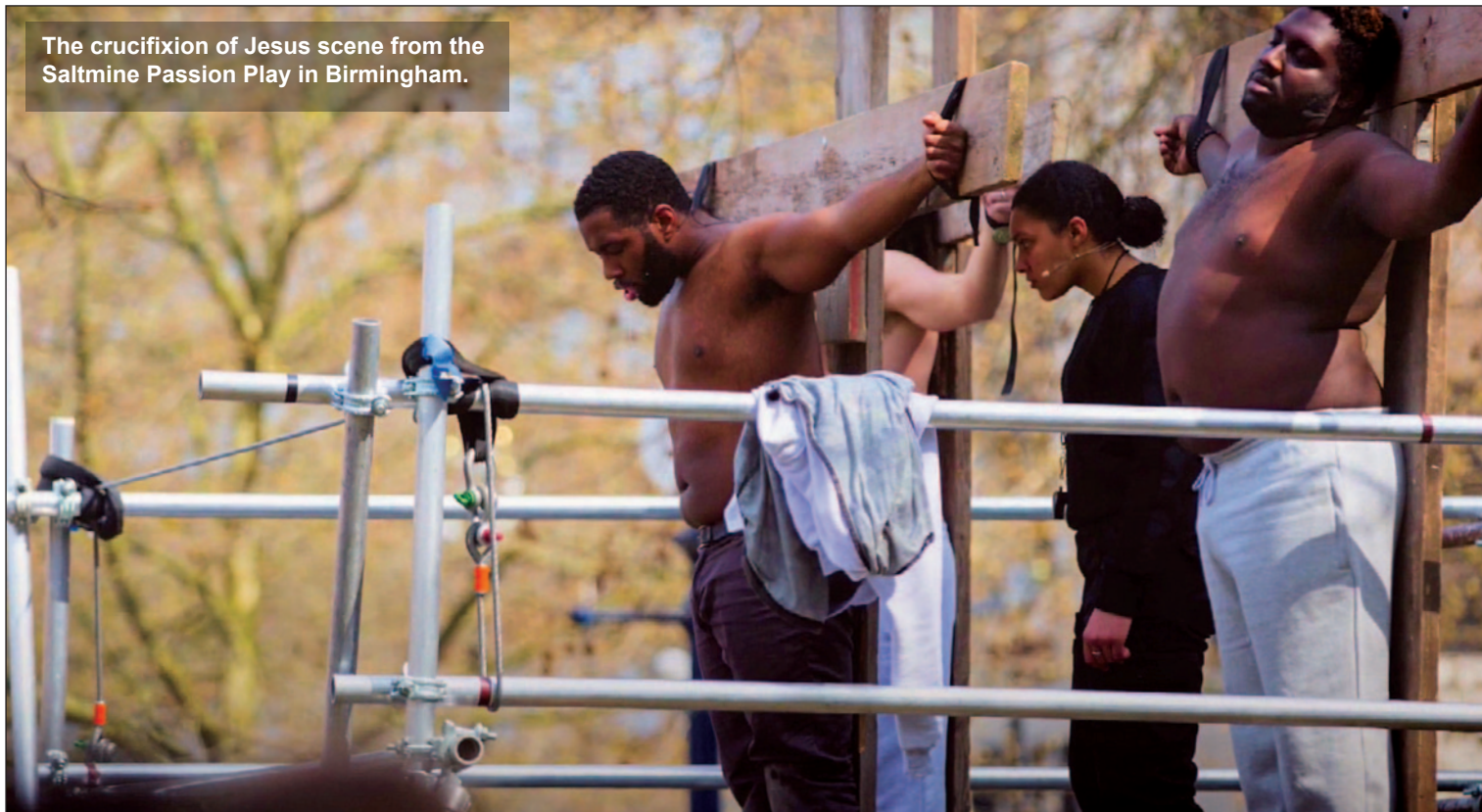
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See the Norwich Passion Play live for free - pages 5-8

The crucifixion of Jesus scene from the Saltmine Passion Play in Birmingham.



Play set to bring the Easter story to life

The Bishop of Norwich has given his whole-hearted backing to the Passion Play which will be performed on the streets of Norwich this Easter Saturday. **Keith Morris** reports.

I'm looking forward immensely to seeing the Norwich Passion Play on Easter Saturday, April 16, in the heart of our city," said Bishop Graham Usher. "Sharing the story of Jesus on the streets of our city is vitally important.

"Live theatre – and in this case particularly – street theatre can have a very immediate and personal impact on those viewing it. It can give a tangible sense of what it may have been like to be in the crowd, seeing Jesus pass by. It can create a sense of wonder, to pique interest and, I hope, to enable people to engage with the Passion of Jesus."

Bishop Graham believes that churches of all denominations will benefit from supporting the event and bringing people along to see it.

*The Norwich
Passion
play 2022*

"I think it's a great opportunity for local churches to invite people they know, who may be putting a toe into exploring who Jesus was and is. Perhaps they may know little about the Easter story, or they may have forgotten much. It may be easier to invite folk to a community event such as this rather than initially inviting them into a church building," he said.

The Bishop can personally recommend the creative work of Saltmine Theatre Company: "I am familiar with the wonderful work of Saltmine from my time as Bishop of Dudley, where they are based. I always enjoyed my visits to them and seeing their new work; they really are fabulous.

"Saltmine is a professional theatre company with a passion for communicating the Gospel, I particularly appreciate their creativity and direct approach. I commissioned them to put on some powerful theatre about domestic violence which had a profound impact in schools and with various community groups. Do bring people along – they are great!"

Such a project which brings Christians from different denominations and groupings to work together is a valuable exercise says Bishop Graham.

"Ecumenical projects such as this, that bring Christians from different churches and backgrounds together, enable us to show unity in our diversity. They help us to realise that we have more in common with one another than we perhaps sometimes think, and we have a common desire to share the good news of Jesus with others.

"This Passion Play is a great gift to allow us to do this on the streets of Norwich. To bring alive a story that's been shared for nearly 2,000 years and make it accessible to so many. I'm looking forward to it and I'll hope to see you there."

■ See special, supplement pages 5-8



A homeless visitor to the night shelter at St John's Cathedral in Norwich.

Homeless shelter in city churches

During the winter months, Norwich Central Baptist Church and St John's Cathedral have been providing a night shelter for homeless people.

■ The Winter Night Shelter is run by Norwich City Council in partnership with local churches. It opened in November and will continue until the end of March. The churches provide the venue (Norwich Central Baptist Church for three nights per week and St John's Cathedral for four nights); other agencies provide additional support including cleaners and security. Referral to the night shelter is through Pathways or Norwich City Council.

The shelter usually starts at about 8.30pm, after soup runs in the city centre, and remains open until 8am. When people leave at 8am they often visit the local day centre available for rough sleepers run by the Salvation Army.

There are on average 10-15 people staying night-by-night, but that number does fluctuate.

The night shelter relies on volunteers every evening and morning whose primary role is to talk to anyone accessing the shelter, check on their wellbeing and liaise with partners to support them in finding longer-term accommodation options.

"During these winter months, we in Cathedral House have acquired wonderful new neighbours," said Fr Simon Davies, "and we have learned a lot about the experiences of the homeless in our city; I have been privileged from time to time to hear some of their stories. Many of them have lived very hard lives, and are filled with sadness, though many, too are full of joy.

"Homelessness is a great ignored plight in our modern world. As we strive to live securely and warmly, many get left behind for all sorts of reasons. We hope that, as well as providing practical help, we have been able to raise awareness of the needs of others."

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Clare's detox centre dream

After developing outreach to the homeless from St Stephen's Church in Norwich, **Clare Melia** is now pioneering the only Christian detox centre in Norfolk open to both men and women. **Eldred Willey** reports.

In a lovely four-bed house just outside Norwich, inconspicuously blending into the community, men and women are breaking their addiction to drugs and alcohol. It is the dream child of Clare Melia from St Stephen's, who spent years qualifying, learning and planning, before opening the home in April 2021.

Clare grew up in rural Norfolk and, before reaching A levels, stepped off the educational conveyor belt to get a job in a factory, sorting parsnips and celery. After moving to Norwich, however, she discovered that she had a gift for numbers and was able to study and qualify in book-keeping and then accountancy.

She had not grown up with any faith so was alarmed when her father – then aged 58 – became a Christian through an Alpha Course at the Fountain of Life Church in Ashill. Wanting to understand how they had managed to brainwash him, she signed up herself. After ten weeks came a day

about the Holy Spirit, whom she had never heard of. She had “a physical encounter which led to a complete change of mindset,” and was baptised at Ashill.

Meanwhile she had got a job with Yarmouth Children's Services, working with youngsters who were disturbed and angry with life. For the first time, she asked God what He wanted her to do with her life and she heard one word: “Housing”. It made no sense at the time. She typed “housing Norwich” into Google and the first thing which came up was an advertisement for an administration job with the St Martin's Housing Trust.

Clare did not get the job, but six months later, St Martin's rang her out of the blue and said they realised they needed a finance person, not an administrator. It was an amazing opportunity to meet clients and learn about the housing system and funding for homelessness.

Clare had been worshipping at St Stephen's, and an administration job came up which fitted in with dropping off her son Dylan at school. Administration gradually morphed into supporting people in the St Stephen's café, which at the time was offering free meals to anyone in need – not just the homeless, but also single mothers, immigrants needing documentation, elderly people needing care and anybody down on their luck. With Clare's input, the church eventually introduced a voucher system and built relationships with probation and housing services. In 2018 Clare was officially appointed part-time community worker for the church.

Working with rough sleepers, Clare realised that there was one thing which did not add up: 92% of them had an addiction, and there was no residential facility in Norwich open to men where they could tackle it head-on. Lots of people were being housed with addictions, and several charities were open to people who had been clean for six months. But for men determined to get off the streets and at the same time off drugs, there was a gaping hole in provision.

Clare started driving these men to detox units in London, Birmingham and even Newcastle, but found that they would go into withdrawal symptoms in the car. So she founded a Community Interest Company and, with the help of volunteers, started doing detox without her own property, sometimes using a B&B. After three years the opportunity came for her to rent a house from the Christian charity Green Pastures, and the REST detox centre was born. Although residents do not need to have faith, the home is overtly Christian, with daily worship, Bible reading and shared meals.

New arrivals are offered a choice of three routes: coming off drugs with no medication



Clare Melia.

but lots of prayer, a three-week exit with drugs to ease withdrawal symptoms, or prescription of methadone or Subutex with a gradually reduced dose. For alcohol detoxes, a doctor is on hand to prescribe should withdrawal symptoms become a concern.

REST has already chalked up some successes in the tug-of-war against addictions. Two individuals have come off crack and heroin. On one occasion residents, feeling the pull of their old drug companions in the city, were on the bus to Norwich when they made a call to the home, asking for someone to bring them back. One man has learned how to cook omelettes, grow tomatoes and flowers, do his washing and look after a puppy.

One day a woman, who had not eaten for days, came into St Stephens asking for help. She had been into drugs for 25 years since the age of 14. Clare took her on, got her clean in three weeks, and REST became a mixed house.

When the government's Covid funding for rough sleepers came to an end, 19 east Europeans who were not eligible for council funding found themselves back on the streets of Norwich. REST took one of them in and covered his costs until he was able to get a job at Bernard Matthews and a private rental.

To be viable, the house needs to aim at full occupancy, a hard target to hit when people with a background in addictions are so unpredictable. For someone with a big heart like Clare, making the books balance is a big challenge when there is so much unmet need which the fledging charity could respond to. So she is always grateful for donations.

REST is also looking for new volunteers. Currently the team includes a doctor, mental health and general nurses and an art therapist, and new volunteers with skills and enthusiasm would be most welcome. If you are interested in either donating or volunteering, you can find out more at: www.restnorwich.org

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The Intersection of Sports & Missions	May 10, 2 pm
The Merging of Arts and Missions (2-part series, 2 hrs each)	May 19, 3 am & Jun 23, 3 am
Creation Care for Today and Tomorrow	May 24, 2 am or May 25, 7 pm
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Faith inspires Foundation chair

Norfolk Community Foundation chairman, **Henry Cator** (OBE), is inspired by his Christian faith and says that giving unconditionally is at the heart of the Foundation's work. **Sandie Shirley** reports.

The Norfolk Community Foundation works alongside more than 100 charities and voluntary groups bringing vital finance and resources to help transform the county's communities.

From little acorns mighty oaks do grow and that is certainly the story of the Foundation. More than a decade ago, it was just an idea to replicate a successful venture in Cornwall. But with a small band of earnest men, including former Bishop of Norwich the Rt Revd Graham James and the Lord Lieutenant Sir Richard Jewson, the ground was ploughed, seeds were sown that included a hefty endowment and today there is a harvest.

Henry Cator took on the challenge of chairman five years ago after his two predecessors helped stake and grow the ground. The independent charity harnesses both charitable and voluntary organisations with professional input to see change and renewal, helping some of the most vulnerable and challenged in the county.

Henry has lived in Norfolk all his life and now resides in the house where he was born. He is passionate about seeing the county thrive and shine. He steps down as chairman later this year after bringing a unique pioneering spirit of adventure to the appointment. It has included jumping from an aeroplane at 14,000 feet for a sponsored charity skydive with Bishop Graham, and their spouses. That daring feat raised £32,000 for the Matthew Project in Norwich proving that the sky really is the limit!

The Foundation boosts support and financial backing with networking, coaching and advice using webinars, videos and specialist publications as it partners with diverse organisations. The work includes inspiring youngsters for the future, supporting domestic abuse victims and homeless addicts and enabling struggling families to put food on the table.

Says Henry: "We gave away £4m of grant money over each of the last two years but it is amazing how quickly you can spend it. We are always looking for new funding on many fronts; ideally I would like to provide grants of over £6m a year."

His role has been forged with experience, compassion and an outworking Christian faith. During his illustrious career, that includes being Deputy Lieutenant of Norfolk and the Crown appointment of High Sheriff of Norfolk, he has been instrumental in raising millions to help worthy causes over the last 25 years, including furthering the objectives of Norwich Cathedral.



Henry Cator - chair of the Norfolk Community Foundation.



Having spent time chatting to clients at the Matthew Project, he understands the sad stories of rejection and demise resulting in addiction and hard living on the streets. Sometimes reputations and professional standing have been eroded by society pressures. But the Foundation is bringing fresh hope and momentum.

"Before Christmas I was talking to one client. He lived in the city but wanted to be involved in the countryside, now he is helping with woodland maintenance and seeing the smile on his face is fantastic because it means so much," said Henry.

The story illustrates the heartbeat of the Foundation as it works to promote health and wellbeing in Norfolk especially after the fall-out from Brexit and Covid.

It has provided support for 'Thrust' with a thriving Thetford venture, where a food bank at the Burrell Centre also provides a debt advice centre to help people manage their affairs. Its success has prompted a similar venture in Great Yarmouth, explains Henry, who was appointed High Steward of Great

Yarmouth in 2013, vowing to give his patronage and protection to the town. The lifelong office was first established after invasion threats from the Spanish Armada in the 16th century.

"We hope to help feed over 5,000 families in Norfolk," continues Henry. "It is ambitious but food is the most basic requirement for families in this country."

During the pandemic when schools were closed and students were forced to work from home, the Foundation helped to provide 2,500 laptops to families. "There are a lot of poorer communities including those who lack the confidence and self-esteem to move on, so raising their aspirations is a very important part of the work as they develop their skills."

"If we can help those less fortunate then it is worthwhile. The pandemic has meant a widening gulf between those who have and those who have not. It is worrying if society ignores the suffering. But Norfolk is special as hundreds and thousands of people are prepared to volunteer – it is the mortar that holds the fabric of our community together as action speaks louder than words."

Giving unconditionally is at the heart of the Foundation emphasises Henry who was a churchgoer with his father as a child and who attended daily chapel at school and consequently worship has become a part of his life as a Christian. Before leaving for boarding school his father gave him a prayer book, inside were the words of the Ignatius of Loyola prayer – a prayer that has had a profound effect on his life:

"Lord, teach me to be generous. Teach me to serve you as you deserve; to give and not to count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wounds, to toil and not to seek for rest, to labour and not to ask for reward, save that of knowing that I do your will."

Reflecting further, Henry talks about the story of the 'Good Samaritan' that Jesus taught. "It is not so much that he stopped and picked up the man who had been robbed and beaten, but that he took him to the inn and paid the unconditional costs for his recovery. Showing unconditional love and support is often the bit that gets missed but it can come with giving our expertise and time not just money," he said.

"When I leave the post this year, I hope my successor will give and get as much enjoyment as I have. If you enjoy what you are doing in your life there is a better chance of doing it well. My life from the role has been an exciting adventure, filled with happiness - variety has been the 'spice of life' but it has always been about people – it is after all "in giving that we receive".

www.norfolkfoundation.com

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Dereham group gives support to Thailand project

■ An Overseas Missionary Fellowship prayer group in Dereham has been supporting Rebecca Penrose as she reaches out to ex-prisoners in Thailand.

Rebecca, who is originally from St Neots in Cambridgeshire, has been working with a project to help ex-prisoners, and their families, as the ex-prisoners make the difficult journey back into society. The project includes building relationships and encouraging the men to learn practical skills which will enable them to support themselves outside prison.

"Every Wednesday evening, we travel out to a home about 40km from Lopburi Town," writes Rebecca, "where we meet with some former prisoners who live there. We read the Bible and pray together. On Saturday afternoons we visit other former prisoners and their families with the intention of encouraging and supporting them. Please pray for wisdom in how best to do this."

Rebecca has now completed a formal course in Thai language, with exams, to help her communicate more effectively.

The OMF team in Thailand has also distributed relief packages for those affected by the Covid pandemic. The distribution coincided with a period of flooding, with many streets under water. The OMF team helped to clear up after the floods went down, which gave an opportunity to further build relationships.

Watch a video of the work with ex-prisoners at: youtu.be/wo8gg40Gc0I

Emma sings to make her dream come true

Norwich-based singer **Emma Nuule** is offering concerts to both help churches raise money and to launch her dream of a performing school in a shanty area of Namibia. **Eldred Willey** reports.

Having used her remarkable gift to help churches in Norfolk and Suffolk raise money for good causes, Emma began to open her heart to a vision which she felt God was giving her – to launch a school of performing arts for the deprived children of Windhoek, the capital of Namibia.

At Blofield parish church she

pioneered the idea of sharing the proceeds of a concert equally between the church and her own embryonic project. After an uplifting evening of music each party took home £220.

The vision for the performing arts school began back in Emma's childhood home, where her parents had a painting on the wall of a desert and a pair of san-

dals. "Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths," said the accompanying verse (Psalm 25:4). "The desert really resonated with me as a child," said Emma. "I realise now that Namibia is a desert, and that God was speaking to me back then."

It was after she met her husband-to-be, Josef, who was visiting from Namibia, and marrying at the age of 18, that the vision began to become reality. Josef bought a piece of land in a shanty area of Windhoek. "One day as I was praying," said Emma, "I felt God saying: 'You're going to create a singing school in Namibia. It was overwhelming. He even gave me the name: Praise and Perform."

"Unlike most places in Windhoek, the area where we bought the land is so run down," said Emma. "They don't even have electricity. People can't stay inside because the little metal shacks get so hot that you burn your skin if you touch the walls."

"Other areas of the city have shopping malls, cinemas and even performing schools. But here there is nothing to do, and the kids are just walking around barefoot in the mountains, where there are snakes. Yet the way they move and sing – they are so talented."

"There is little employment, and at a certain age the young people just start drinking. My vision is to create a school where they could do singing, drama and painting. It would be quite simple – just a tent roof and an amphitheatre for the audience."

Emma had been working as a cleaner at the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital but really wanted to be a singer. One day she prayed about it earnestly in the toilets, and as she came out someone passing in the hospital corridor mentioned a company Global Talent Competition; she entered and won the UK and global competitions. After the competition she was put in touch with a private singing tutor in London to develop her technical skills and enlarge her range.

"I am a cross-over soprano," explains Emma, "which means I can sing in different styles. I have a belt voice which comes from the chest and which I use for theatre and popular music, and a head voice

which I use for opera. It comes naturally to me to want to be glamorous, but I don't want all just to be 'me, me, me'. I want to use this gift to do something amazing."

That 'something amazing' is increasingly coming into focus in Namibia. The family currently attend an African congregation, an outreach of the Redeemed Christian Church of God which meets in the afternoon at St Anne's Earlham in Norwich. The routine works for deep-thinking Kleophas (15), for upbeat Taleni (12), who has a football appointment on Sunday mornings and for happy Faith, who is just three.

And yet Africa calls. "The children are happier there," said Emma. "They feel free. Josef has always worked with cars and would like to start his own company. I'd love to move for him. I couldn't do any of this without my husband – he is amazing, a good man."

The family just have to work out God's timing as Emma continues to share her singing gift and cast her vision.

If you would like Emma to put on a concert at your church, on her own or with your own musicians, please contact her on emmanuule@gmail.com. She is also hoping to start a small UK charity to promote the project, which would allow donations to be gift aided. If you are interested in Africa and have organisational skills which could support this, please contact her for a discussion.





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The Norwich Passion play 2022

Easter Saturday,
April 16,
11am and 3pm.

Starts at Hay Hill in
Norwich and moves
to Millennium Plain
and St Peter
Mancroft.

The event is free
and lasts around 90
minutes.
All are welcome

Role as Jesus both excites and terrifies

Norwich-born actor **Freddy Goymer** is set to return to his hometown to take on the leading role of Jesus in the Norwich Passion Play this Easter – an opportunity which fills him with both trepidation and excitement. **Keith Morris** reports.

For the past ten years, the 31-year old actor has toured the country and beyond acting with Saltmine Theatre Company, who are coming to Norwich on Easter Saturday, April 16.

Freddy is taking on the leading role in the play, which covers the final days of Jesus Christ's life, death and resurrection. He said: "I am excited to be able to share this incredible story in Norwich which is a city close to my heart. It is a real privilege and a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity."

"It also makes me feel quite vulnerable and frankly terrified as it will be out on the streets for anyone to see."

"It is a big responsibility to play Jesus, but I hope I can bring a bit of who I know and believe him to be," said Freddy, "as the gospel story is very close to my heart. I hope I can convey the heart and message of Jesus through this Passion Play."

"People may have this idea of Jesus in a long white robe with a big beard, from ancient history. I hope to help bring a relevant, radical, modern-day Jesus to the

streets of Norwich."

There will be two free performances of the play in and around Millennium Plain at 11am and 3pm.

"As a theatre company we are really keen that it is a performance outside of a traditional theatre setting, on the streets and it is free to watch," said Freddy. "For us, it is

about engaging as many people as possible. We hope it grabs the attention of people who may be out shopping or having coffee. We would like the performance to provoke questions for the audience."

"We want people to maybe ask 'Is this theatre or is this really happening?'. That is why we set it in a modern context. If Jesus came to earth today, who would he reach out to? Who would he stand up for? We hope it provokes people to think how the Gospel can be relevant for them today in 2022."

Freddy was born and grew up in Norwich, attending Notre Dame High School before leaving to study Ancient History at the University of Reading. He joined Saltmine in 2012 and has more recently starting working in the educational team at the Royal Shakespeare Company.

He describes acting as "a life-long dream. I love seeing what stories do to people – whether it makes them laugh or cry. Theatre

can really change people. That, for me, is why I love making theatre and acting."

Freddy now lives in the West Midlands, where Saltmine Trust is based, with his wife Beth, who is also from Norwich and they have just had their first child which was "a life-changing experience" and "the best decision we ever made" he said.

Hope of new life at Easter

Norwich teacher, Ruth Lilley, explains how the hope of new life promised by the Easter story has helped her to avoid being held back by dwelling on past events.

■ I tend to have a habit of defining my life as 'before' and 'after' - Before the event that seemed to cause my life to fall apart, and after that event.

It might be that for many of us right now, we can also define our lives as before and after, especially with the effect that Covid has had on all of our lives.

At this time of year we celebrate Easter, an event which very much demonstrates a before and after. We see the sadness and darkness of Jesus' death, but this is soon replaced by the light, joy and newness of Easter Sunday. The reality that Jesus had risen and defeated the darkness.

This year, Celebrate Norwich and Norfolk are staging the Passion Play on Easter Saturday, April 16. This is a live retelling of the story of Easter, which will happen in the city centre, and will be an amazing opportunity to see what happened and the significant impact Jesus had on the lives of those around Him.

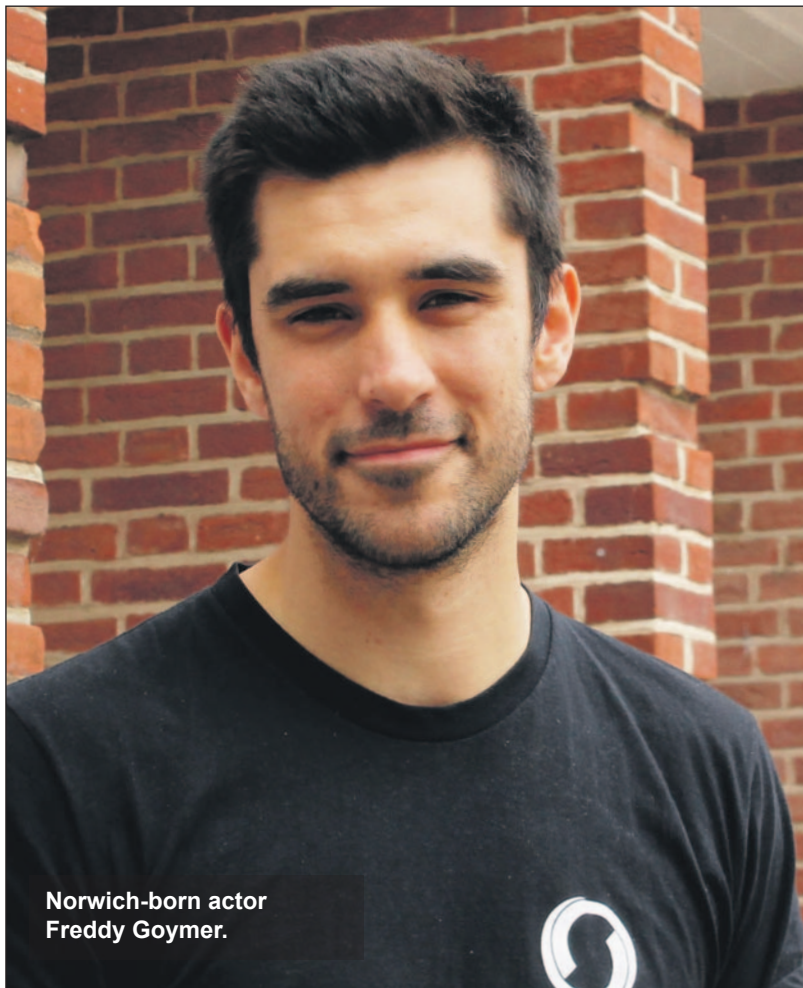
I imagine that, on the Friday when Jesus died, His friends must have been distraught and felt that nothing would be the same again. A feeling that I can identify with, and maybe plenty of us can associate with this feeling too. In that moment, I wonder if His friends felt so desperately lost, because they would have had no idea of the joy that was only days away.

Going back to my "Before and After" habit – I believe that habits can be either helpful or unhelpful, and I realise that this is one of those unhelpful habits that needs to be broken.

If I look at the events in my life through the light of Easter, I can see a much brighter picture. When something significant happens, there can be the thought pattern that causes you to define yourself by the event. For me, this thought pattern has been a hindrance. Whereas if I change my perspective and live in the hope of Easter, I choose life.

As I place my trust in this hope, I know that I am loved and that every single step I take in the 'after' is covered by love. Sometimes, my heart has been so heavy, it has felt almost impossible to take that next step. Yet, if I can hold on to the freshness, the newness that Jesus brought on that first Easter Day, I am no longer defined by my viewpoint.

I am no longer 'before' or 'after'. So, then comes a beautiful simplicity which means that each new step I take can be exciting, new and covered by amazing grace and love.



Norwich-born actor
Freddy Goymer.

Come and watch free Norwic

Norwich churches, Saltmine Theatre Company and charity Celebrate Norfolk are joining together to put on a free professional Passion Play on the streets of Norwich city centre this Easter.

Taking place on Easter Saturday, April 16 at both 11am and 3pm, the drama tells the history changing story of the last few days of Jesus' life.

It will start at Hay Hill and process up to Millennium Plain in front of the Forum with the audience following the actors. It will then move to outside St Peter Mancroft church and the final scene will be inside the church.

Taking part in the immersive 90-minute performance will be a dozen

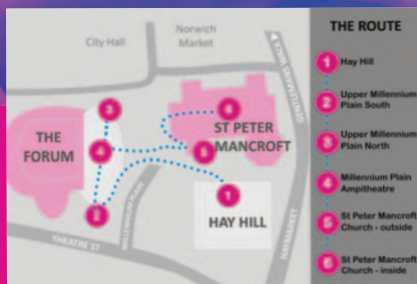
professional actors from Dudley-based Saltmine Theatre Company as well as 20 or so community cast actors from a number of Norwich churches.

First performed in Birmingham city centre in 2019, the play attracted audiences of several thousand people following it through the city centre streets.

Rachael Orrell, Chief Executive of the Saltmine Trust, said: "Seeing people engaged and transfixed by the modern interpretation of Jesus' story to the cross and resurrection is something I will never forget."

Celebrate chair of trustees, Keith Morris, said: "We hope that the dramatic performance of the greatest story ever told, on the streets of Norwich for all to enjoy for free, will be an engaging and immersive experience not to be missed.

"Everyone is welcome to attend and please bring your family and friends with you."



Come and join us as Celebrate Norwich & Norfolk, Saltmine Theatre Company and local churches

present the extraordinary Easter Story of Jesus' death and resurrection, live on the streets of Norwich

Easter Saturday April 16, 2022
11am and 3pm

Starts at Hay Hill in Norwich

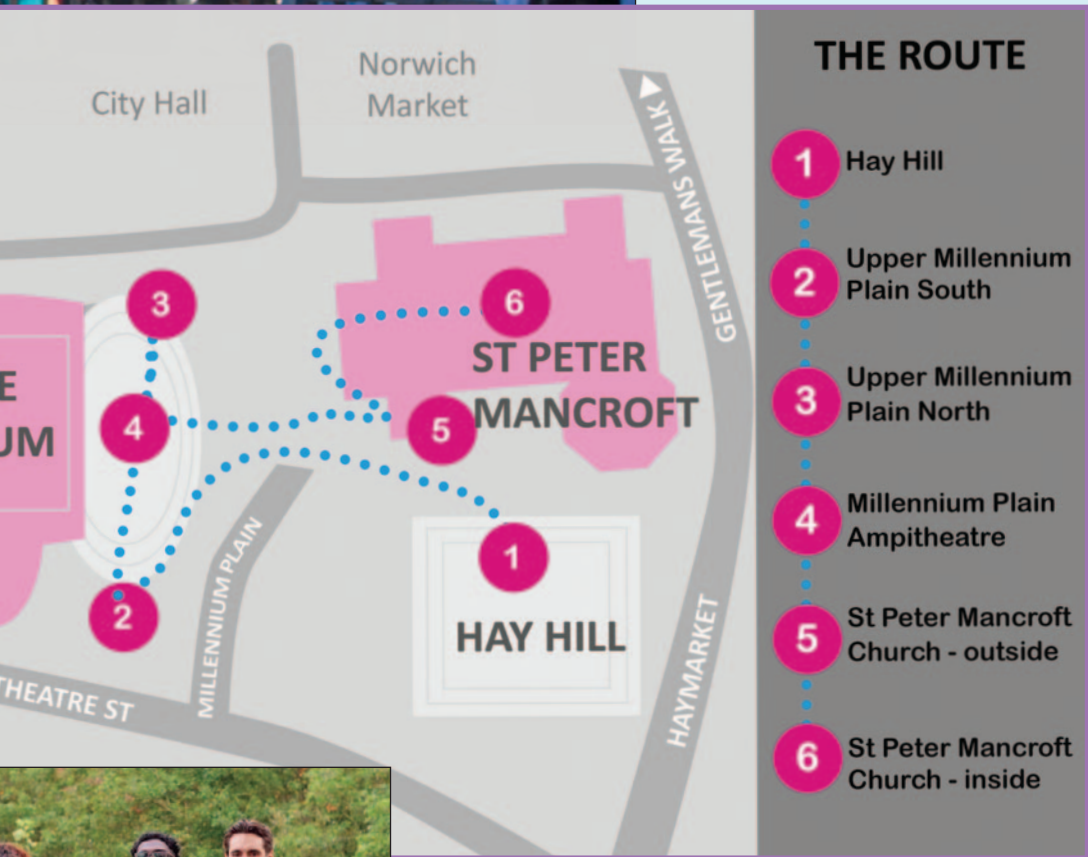
The event is free and lasts around 90 minutes.



Pictured are scenes from the Saltmine Passion Play, staged in Birmingham in 2019, including the team from Saltmine, right.



h Passion Play



The Norwich
Passion
play 2022

What is a passion play?

A Passion Play is a dramatic portrayal of what has been called the greatest story ever told – the events of the last week of Jesus’ life, depicting the events leading up to his crucifixion on a cross.

■ It is the real story of Easter and it has all the elements of stories that are compelling and confronting: betrayal, injustice, sacrifice, redemption and a startling ending. As Passion Plays dramatize the story of Easter, they allow it to speak again to new audiences in new contexts.

The Passion Trust, which is helping to fund the Norwich Passion Play, says: “Passion Plays use theatre to bring the words of the Gospel to life in new, often vivid and startling, ways. They show how the message of second chances, forgiveness and new opportunities has the potential to speak life and hope into communities struggling with poverty, crime, addiction or hopelessness and boredom.”

Many Passion Plays also include a dramatic portrayal of Jesus’ life, including his teachings and miracles, and his resurrection to show the context in which his death took place.

Why are they called Passion Plays?

■ The Passion Trust says: “The word ‘Pas-

sion’ refers to the fervent love Jesus had for the people he came to save. The Bible tells us that ‘God so loved the world that he sent his only son so that no one would perish but all would come to eternal life’. Such fervent love endures all suffering and we know that Jesus ‘for the joy set before him, endured the cross, despising its shame’.”

The Archbishop of Canterbury, The Most Rev Justin Welby said: “Passion Plays have been a feature of the life of our country since the Middle Ages, and for good reason: there is no greater story than that of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. I hope and pray that this Easter, you can be caught up in the story of the love of God for the world in the person of Jesus. Come and See.”

History of Passion Plays

■ Easter plays and religious dramas have a long and popular history in the UK.

Today’s Passion Plays look back to the medieval Mystery Plays which involved the whole community in performances of the Bible story during the feast of Corpus Christi.

Medieval Mystery Plays were performed on pageant wagons at different sites around city centres. In medieval York, for example, the Mystery Plays dramatised the whole Bible from the Fall of Man to the Last Judgement.

Mystery Plays were so popular that royal and noble visitors had special performances put on for them.

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Audience is drawn into the final few days of Jesus' life

Norwich Passion Play script-writer and actor, **Emily Feltham**, says its engaging nature aims to draw the audience into the play itself and bring the story of Jesus' final few days on earth to life. **Keith Morris** reports.

A UEA masters graduate, and professional actor with Saltmine Theatre Company, Emily has written smaller pieces for schools, theatre companies and even the NHS. But the Passion Play, written first for use in Birmingham in 2019, is her first major production.

"Our vision was to tell the story of Jesus in a contemporary way. We tried to imagine that if he was alive in Birmingham or

Norwich today what would he be doing, who would be talking to, what kinds of things would he be saying, who would he be challenging," said Emily who also play Mary Magdalene in the play.

"To begin to unpack the story into a contemporary style, I had to go really deeply into the words of the Gospel and the words of Jesus, comparing the different Gospels and the different accounts and then updating it and rewriting it with modern illustrations for example. It was a fun process and I really enjoyed it while also finding it quite challenging, but I was also very pleased with the results.

"What came out of the performances in Birmingham was something bigger than any of us could ever have imagined. So many things could have gone wrong on the day as we were performing in a busy city centre. But the impact of it and the amount of people who came to watch it was far bigger than even I had imagined.

"Any performance you do several times is going to evolve a bit, especially in this sort of immersive performance when you see which bits actually work and which bits you might actually deliver to a few people rather than the whole audience, like you would in a theatre.

"We had a bit where the cast passed phones around in the crowd with a YouTube video of part of the trial scene where Jesus was being interrogated – an experiment with different sorts of media to try to convey the secrecy around Jesus' trial."

Emily studied for an English degree in Oxford and then worked in a museum as an assistant curator of ethnography in the



Emily Feltham as Mary Magdalene in the Birmingham Passion Play she wrote for Saltmine.

Royal Albert Museum in Exeter.

She then moved to Norwich for a year, studying a Master's Degree in the Arts of Africa, Oceania and the Americas at the Sainsbury's Research Unit at the UEA. It involves research into indigenous peoples and the art they produce, the stories they tell and the way that they share them.

"I was intrigued and discovered a lot about my own understanding of God in the way that other people groups talk about and relate to God and live spiritually in a way in which you tell stories as part of your everyday life.

"I was interested in how you can use theatre and performance to allow people whose first language is a spoken not written language to talk about themselves.

"Much of life is about telling stories and that is one of the powerful things about bringing the Passion Play onto the streets," said Emily.

"It immerses people in the story so instead of inviting people into a theatre where they sit down and they watch and listen to a story, it takes people and puts them right in the middle of the story. They can experience where they might be in the story and how they might react and actually end up having an investment in how the story ends, rather than just watching people perform."

"There is something powerful about having a walking performance which turns you into an active audience even if you are just watching. You have to pursue the story and actively follow it rather than being passive and just taking it in.

"It can really blur the line between

storytelling actors, local community cast members and the audience.

The local community cast are a really important part of the Passion Play and working with them is really amazing, says Emily, as is the sense of being a team and having an investment in the story and building relationships with the other cast members.

While living in Norwich, Emily attended St Thomas Norwich church and loved being a part of it. She joined a Gospel choir which sang in hospital wards and at weddings.

"We are really passionate about getting individuals from different churches working together in something which is so public and central," she said.

"After all, this is a story which unites all of us, whatever differences we have in doctrine or beliefs or the way we worship. This is a story we all want to get behind and share.

"After the Birmingham play, we had some beautiful stories and feedback afterwards of its impact on people. A lot of people were excited about it and asking questions about what are these people doing on the streets and what does it mean. Even the people who react negatively, it is well 'why has this drawn such a response from you?,' said Emily.

"We want to start conversations. Churches can really use that catalyst of 'something has happened' to get people to discuss it and ask questions about it and feel excited about it. And having people around who can say, 'well come down the pub to chat about it' or 'come to church to find out more', that can be really special."

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Patrick is crazy about horses

The varied strands of **Patrick Coghlan's** life as a minister, counsellor, author and former riding school owner have come together in his most recent book 'Crazy about Horses'. **Sandie Shirley** reports.

At the age of 67, Patrick is still an avid horse rider who has remained unsaddled by the ups and downs of life and whose insights and experiences have been sifted within the pages of 40 published paperbacks including his latest teen novel that explores faith, justice, bullying and life with horses.

Life is busy and fulfilling but he rides a vintage style Royal Enfield motorbike along coastal and country roads from his Aylsham home, to relax and unwind.

Fifty years ago, Patrick bravely mounted a massive horse prepared to ride on the open road. He had no skills or experience and admits he had to hang on for dear life. But undaunted, it marked a new pastime and evolving career. He practised and trained under the watchful gaze of some of the foremost names in the business as the strict disciplines of horsemanship were forged and mastered.

From cross-country, jumping and dressage to stable management, Patrick went on to open his own riding school, instructing pupils and breeding horses until it had to close five years later.

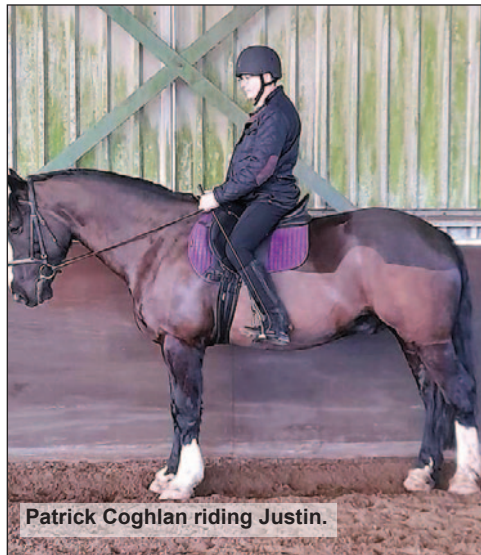
His life has been peppered with success and challenges. As a schoolboy he was terrorised by bullies and later grappled with difficulties in the workplace and rejections from publishers. And during two riding accidents he broke his leg twice within six months, initially vowing to never ride again but he was soon back in the saddle.

Through them all he has learnt to overcome with a persistent spirit knowing God has helped him through trauma, loss and disappointment. It has birthed empathy and understanding for others as a long-standing minister and counsellor which in turn has seen him become a prolific author after writing four short family novels to read to his children when they were young.

He explains: "We need to love the person we have become through the good times but also the difficult ones. Even though we may look back and wish they had never happened without them we would not be the people we have become. If we know God has a good plan for us, and I believe he does, we are equipped with what we have today because of the things we have gone through earlier in our lives."

During the last 21 years, he has written resources for children and older people and everything in between from Christian study books and those that have examined trauma and depression as he has shared personal and honest insights to help others.

Reflects Patrick: "I was bullied at school and even had my nose broken. But when asked by a teacher if anything was wrong, I



Patrick Coghlan riding Justin.

remained silent. In hindsight I could have ended the bullying if I had spoken up. We do not have to put up with bullying, we can confront the issues or find a way to move out of the environment and move forward."

Patrick has a strong Christian heritage from his parents, grandmother and aunt. When he and his family stepped inside an empty church at the age of three, Patrick climbed up to the lectern as if he were about to preach. Even then he knew God had a purpose for him; he has been a minister for the last 28 years and today he is at Worstead Baptist Church in North Norfolk.

His unlikely training began as a riding instructor. "It was surprising how many clients took me into their confidence, telling me their problems and issues. I practised my listening skills for counselling and being a minister, focussing on what they were saying and not butting in. It was also an opportunity to talk about faith when I was asked about it."

Patrick reflects on the analogies between his life with horses and his faith.

"During my twenties I travelled to have lessons with some top-notch trainers; people who were held in very high esteem in the horse world," says Patrick.

He enjoyed the lessons, appreciating the knowledge, wisdom, insight and experience that was shared. He built relationships of trust knowing their lessons were good and right. "I knew they would not expect me to do anything I wasn't able to do and if there were any problems along the way they would help to sort them out."

"Despite the excellent training I received, horse riding still demanded qualities like patience, sensitivity, good listening skills, endurance, perseverance, determination... and the courage to get back on when things went wrong."

The Christian journey is not easy and demands qualities similar for horse riding adds Patrick: "They include, of course, the courage to metaphorically get back up when we fall. But the rewards are amazing and eternal!"

■ Crazy about Horses (Instant Apostle) £8.99 is available from info@instantapostle.com or email: patrick@acsmail.net who is also available for book and speaking events.

Day to inspire youth work

■ Growing everyday faith is the theme of the One Big Day conference, taking place at the end of April in Dereham.

The conference day, organised by the Diocese of Norwich Children, Youth and Families Team in partnership with the regional New Wine Network, is to equip and resource anyone involved in ministry with children, young people and families. It has a key focus around 'Growing everyday faith' – between generations within church, through schools' work and in families – and thinking about how to include and hear the voice of young people.

Keynote national speakers are Lauren Sheath, a champion of Parenting for Faith (BRF) for the past nine years and a children's pastor and currently the Head of Kids at St Peter's, Brighton, and Nigel Roberts, experienced in school chaplaincy and the Education Adviser for Youth for Christ.

Representatives from organisations such as Youthscape, Sports Factory, and Wild Church Norfolk, will lead seminars on topics including Youth Culture, Sports Ministry, Wild Church, Children's Spirituality, Innova-

tive Worship, and Intergenerational Church.

A marketplace exhibition includes, amongst many others, Care for the Family, Transforming Lives for Good, Open the Book, New Wine, Mission Enablers, and Scripture Union and a bookstall provided by Green Pastures, Dereham.

The Bishop of Lynn will launch the day with a short reflection and blessing, and Sara and Sam Hargreaves from Engage Worship, will be leading worship.

Jonathan Richardson, Children, Youth and Families Development Officer at the Diocese of Norwich, said: "After our last conference we were encouraged to hear how many connections were made as a result of the networking opportunities. We pray that you will leave the day refreshed, inspired and equipped, not just by listening to our speakers and seminar leaders but also by sharing with each other stories of what God is doing."

One Big Day: Saturday April 30, 9am-4pm, Northgate High School, Dereham, NR19 2EU. Cost £15 including breakfast and lunch. Visit: www.dofn.org/one-big-day

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Norwich couple **Hannah and Zac Wells** will be moving to Nicaragua with their three small children later this year, fulfilling a dream they have each had for the last 20 years. **Keith Morris** reports.



Pictured are Zac and Hannah with their children Margot, Edith and Zebedee

Family's Nicaragua dream

The couple met as teenagers at the University of East Anglia in 2008 after Hannah had spent a year in Bolivia. Ever since then they have shared a dream to become Christian missionaries in Latin America.

They have been drawn to Nicaragua as one of the Western Hemisphere's poorest countries with 30% of the population living in poverty – on less than \$3 a day – and a majority of families living without father figures present.

Zac said: "From the age of 15 I have felt God speaking to me about being a missionary. I read about street kids in Brazil and that is when God first broke my heart for them and that part of the world. When I met Hannah, she had a similar passion and calling and we saw God develop that."

Hannah said: "When we met, we shared a mutual interest in Latin America, missions and faith. We felt the Holy Spirit say we were going to get married – which we did in 2010.

"In 2012 we went to New Wine and heard Heidi Baker who leads a worldwide ministry called Iris Global. She told these amazing stories of God meeting the poorest of the poor and it sparked something in us. At the time we wanted to go straight to Latin America but we were advised by our church leaders that the timing wasn't quite right."

Soon after, the couple both felt God was still speaking to them about their shared dream.

Hannah said: "I had a vision of myself going into a really dark place and taking children out by the hand. I was leading a line of children by the hand and Jesus was there. And I felt he was calling me to be a mother and I was wrecked."

Zac said: "I felt God was saying 'go to the poorest and darkest place' and Nicaragua fit-

ted into that category. Soon afterwards we met a couple of separate people who had spent time in Nicaragua, which seemed like confirmation to us."

"So we sold all our things, packed up our lives and we went out to Heidi Baker's Harvest School in South Africa for six weeks, where we heard from missionaries from all over the world. Then, in 2015, we went to Nicaragua for six weeks, as that is the place God had spoken to us about. God provided the money to fly out literally a few hours after we asked for it."

A friend had shared with them a vision of a city by a lake at sunset with the twinkling lights coming on. Zac said: "In Nicaragua, we visited the city of Granada, where we have some friends, and we sat up on the hillside by the lake and we saw the lights gradually coming on across the city. We felt this was confirmation by God that this was the right place to go."

During the visit they also connected with a ministry called Reap Granada and were impressed by what they saw.

The couple, now in their early thirties, returned to Norwich where Zac felt a bit frustrated but trained as a nurse, with Hannah being a stay-at-home mum. They say they grew and learnt an awful lot, besides having three children – Zebedee 6, Edith 5 and Margot 18 months.

And now the dream is finally about to become a reality after they agreed to go out and work with Reap Granada, which is based at a 70-acre farm at Campo de Coshecha. There is a multi-purpose pavilion for youth retreats, conferences, teaching, and worship; dorm space for 150 guests and a working farm.

The ministry started four house churches

one year ago and now have 17. They are hoping to grow that to 40 in the next couple of years with the help of Zac and Hannah who will train up the churches' leaders.

"Reap is completely invested in its community, connecting with people through work, sport, at the prison and at the city dump – they are in it long term," said Hannah. "They have seen different generations of families become Christians and then really change the family dynamic. That really excites us."

Zac said: "They are about community which is what we are all about. We just want to see people's lives transformed by Jesus – and experience his peace and his hope and his love. Nine out of ten families in a community we visited in Nicaragua did not have a father figure. Fathers turn to drink or drugs or other women. We want to see men become what God has called them to be."

Hannah said: "We are in it for the long haul. We are not planning on coming back unless God tells us to. The main thing is that we are being obedient to what we feel God is calling us into and giving him our 'Yes'. Moving across the world to a developing country just happens to be what our 'yes' looks like. We are taking one step at a time and this is just the first one.

"Even the other mothers at the school gate are really exciting and intrigued about it. There is a sense of a big adventure around it for them."

The couple are looking for people who will support their venture in both prayer and maybe financially, for at least the first couple of years. Costs will include flights, learning Spanish and living costs. You can contact them at: Zacharyandhannahwells@gmail.com

Maureen England

Maureen Martin has lifted the WFA cup at Carrow Road, established the first women's team in Norwich and travelled the world playing for England. **Helen Baldry** reports.

While the first chapter of her life was entirely about football, in later life Maureen became a Christian and discovered there is room for faith and football.

Maureen grew up in Norwich in a large family. She said: "There was no football at school, so I played with my brothers. I was better than them, so they always wanted me on their team!"

Maureen has been a Christian for over two decades, but the faith chapter of her life opened only after her football playing chapter had closed. She said: "I couldn't play football and go to church. Football was my life. The chapter of my church life is a lot shorter. The best thing I've done was when I got baptised."

Maureen joined Costessey Ladies at the age of 21. In 1975 she joined Lowestoft Ladies, the top team in East Anglia at the time. In 1981 Maureen decided to set up a team in her home city of Norwich. She created the team Norwich Ladies, known as The Fledgelings and was determined for them to go far.

At this time women's football was still emerging from the 50-year ban that halted the sport's progress in 1921 and there was little investment or interest in the women's sport. Maureen had to do everything herself; she secured sponsorship, coached and managed the side. Maureen managed the team alongside her full-time job as company director for Anglia Lead Roofing. She describes herself as 'a bit of a disciplinarian' and worked the team hard, ensuring they got to training on time and committed to the team.

Maureen went on to earn five England caps, the first of which was against Belgium in 1980 when she captained the team in her debut match. Maureen suffered a serious injury during a match in 1983 against Hemel Hempstead when she broke her ankle. Unable to play again, she continued to

**was WFA cup winner and
international captain**

manage the Norwich team and led them to victory in the WFA Cup in 1986 at Carrow Road. Ill health forced Maureen to reluctantly retire from football. She often wonders what it would be like to be involved in women's football at professional level today.

Maureen's faith journey started in the year 2000, when her mother died of cancer. Maureen said: "It was a horrendous death, I can still see it now." She received counselling and the counsellor was a Salvation Army man.

“It was good to talk. He helped me a great deal. He knew I was pretty lonely and he asked if I would like to meet up with another lady. She was a Christian and she came round and we had a long chat. She encouraged me to come to church. I wasn’t sure I wanted to go at first because I don’t like all the reading out of books. She said we’d go to a different one to that and she took me to Witard Road Baptist Church. There was a band and Bible teaching. I loved it.

"I sat at the back so not many people could see I was someone new. They noticed though! I really enjoyed it. The next week I was brave and went on my own."

Maureen never missed a Sunday after that and after two years she became the church treasurer. She

hasn't looked back since and has been a regular attender – first of WRBC and currently a member at Norwich Central Baptist Church.

Crafting is another of Maureen's passions; she used to run crafting groups in her local area, and in residential care homes, including crochet, card making, scrapbooking and parchment craft. She has carefully organised all her footballing memorabilia, photos, and team lists into beautifully presented scrapbooks, one for each year of her footballing career. Maureen has similarly organised the photos of her baptism and the cards she received at the occasion to mark it as a pivotal moment in her life.

Maureen was baptised at Witard Road Baptist Church on January 1, 2006 by Rev David Adams

and church leader David Robinson.

A keen Manchester United supporter, her bookshelves are full of footballing autobiographies and books on women's football that she has contributed to. Another bookshelf in her Brundall home contains shelves of Christian books, commentaries and notes.



Maureen Martin with the WFA trophy.



Maureen Martin.

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Encounter with God gives hope



Facing an 18-hour cancer operation and the end of a dream life in France, Norfolk painter Nicholas Elliott had an “amazing” encounter with God in a London church.

Back in 2000, after too many years of a thoroughly stressful existence, Nicholas sold out of his marketing company in London to pursue a career in art. He rented out his flat and lived cheaply in India and Spain where he taught himself the rudiments of oil painting.

In 2008, following a successful exhibition in London's Cork Street, Nicholas gained London Gallery representation and moved to Brittany in France where he transformed an old barn in the garden into a dream studio.

However, no sooner did he begin working in the studio than his dream turned into a nightmare when he was diagnosed with cancer of the jaw.

He returned to the UK for treatment at the Queen Victoria Hospital in East Grinstead which specialises in head and neck cancer surgery.

“Back in England, I had a series of MRI scans and x-rays,” said Nicholas. “By which time the tumour had rapidly grown and become so aggressive it had actually broken through my cheek and I bled constantly in and outside my mouth, which I could now barely open. I was in great pain.”

An 18-hour operation by two teams of surgeons was planned to remove the tumour by taking away the entire left side of Nicholas' jaw and cheek and reconstructing his face using titanium and parts of his right leg.

There were so many things that could go wrong during the surgery that it took the consultant surgeon 45 minutes to go through the patient consent documentation.

“The week before my operation a dear friend and committed Christian, Charlotte Ashenden, phoned to ask if I could get to St Mary's Church in Loughton that Sunday where she and others would pray for me. I was taking powerful painkillers but something told me I should go. I thought I had nothing to lose. Although I wasn't a Christian I went to church as a kid and did believe in a God, a creator or a higher power, and hoped that the power of prayer might help.

“When I got to the church I waited at the back for Charlotte to arrive. There I was standing on my own with a large dressing on my face to cover the tumour in a very unfamiliar evangelical environment. I had

no idea what to do. And then, at this moment of despair, I was engulfed by what I can only describe as the presence of Love in every sinew of my being, how long it lasted I have no idea – it was the most amazing thing that has ever happened to me and I have no doubt that it was God.

“My operation was a success and I believe that God was working with those wonderful surgeons,” said Nicholas.

“It hasn't all been a bed of roses since then. I had lost so much – my appearance therefore my identity, my home, my car and lots of money and some friends strangely enough – perhaps because my values have changed.

“I struggled with the psychological effects of life-changing cancer and subsequent reconstructive surgery and this stalled my work. I settled in North Norfolk for recuperation and convalescence, which I see as a God-given gift. My growing faith has



strengthened my resolve and I have gradually begun to produce more and more paintings.

“My heightened awareness of my own mortality and increased appreciation of creation is what drives my work now,” he said. “Noticing things that perhaps I didn't notice before and seeing something that I want others to see – be that in still life, landscape or floral subjects – this is my artistic goal. I am all the happier if I am able to inject beauty into a world with its fair share of troubles.”

■ Nicholas is now Vice President of the Institute of East Anglian Artists (IEA) and you can see his work, alongside that of four other artists, at an exhibition called: “The Salthouse Creative '22 - a Celebration of the Glory of God in Creation and Creativity. It takes place at Salthouse Church from April 18-23, 10am to 5pm.

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