

GOOD NEWS

FOR NORWICH & NORFOLK

Easter 2010: FREE

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Major Christian celebration to fill Norwich city centre

More details have been announced for the major **Celebrate Norwich & Norfolk Christian** event planned for Norwich in June following on from last year's successful Churches Community Action Fair.

It aims to be an expression of all aspects of the life of the local Christian community and will take the form of a series of events planned around mid June in Norwich city centre.

The centrepiece exhibition will feature 24 different Christian organizations and groups from all over Norfolk and will fill the entire Atrium area inside The Forum on June 11 and 12.

Alongside this, the NYFC Gospel choir, an African Gospel choir, Salvation Army brass band, East Norwich Youth Project dance team, puppets and motorcycles will all be part of a colourful programme of open-air events taking place on Millennium Plain outside the Forum.

Bowthorpe puppet ministry, which made its name at the Living Water festivals, will be

Celebrate

Norwich & Norfolk

appearing in full Muppet force with a repertoire of short and striking acts.

YMCA Norfolk, The Matthew Project and the Christian Motorcycle Association will also be present on Millennium Plain throughout the whole of the celebration to share the excellent work which they are doing.

Inside the Curve Theatre venue inside the Forum, a series of seminars will tackle topical issues and feature Dr John Hayward, Executive

Director of the Jubilee Centre on "Assisted Suicide: A Matter of Life and Death" and Malcolm Flanagan C.B.E former director of ITN's News at Ten on "Television: Bane or Boon", alongside a Question Time type panel and the Transforming Norwich AGM.

Other associated Celebrate events are planned to include a County Town Dinner with the Norwich FGB, a lunchtime concert at St Peter Mancroft, a Norwich Christian Resource Centre book event and an event at the Open Youth Venue.

Prayer events leading up to Celebrate take place on April 9 and May 7.

A special edition of *Good News for Norwich & Norfolk* will be produced in mid May and be available at local churches and from all participating organizations.

Latest news and events at:
www.celebratenorfolk.co.uk

Celebrate launch – see article on page 3

in brief

Norwich African church opens door

A church which started life in the refugee camps of the Congo in Africa has established itself in a Norwich church hall and has just joined Transforming Norwich.

The Swahili speaking 'Rivers of Life' Church, is currently based in St Augustine's Hall where it meets on Sunday afternoons.

The congregation is made up of displaced people from the Democratic Republic of Congo who for many years lived in refugee camps around Africa. They began the church in these camps and then came to Norwich.

Pastor Didier Ngolo, said: "We are delighted to be welcomed to Norwich in such a hospitable way and are very pleased to be joining the group."

The Rivers of Life church number about 50 adults and 30 children. They have a Gospel Choir, which performs professionally, and specialises in supporting people when they arrive in this country from abroad.

"We do need some help," said Ngolo. "We hope to set up some English classes and computer classes. If anyone could do some teaching in these areas we would be most grateful. We are also looking for anyone who can help us through the maze of grant applications."

The Rivers of Life Choir will be appearing in the Celebrate Norwich & Norfolk event in June.

If you can help the church in any way, please e-mail Didier on didier.ngolo@yahoo.co.uk

Book fair celebrates

The ever popular annual Norwich Feed the Minds book fair celebrates its fortieth year of work and this year it is taking place from Wednesday July 7 to Saturday July 10 at St Andrew's Church, St Andrews Street.

Thousands of books will be on sale and admission is free. The fair is open from 10 – 5pm each day except Saturday when it opens from 9 – 1pm finishing with a silent auction from 11am. Help is needed on July 2 and from July 5 onwards to prepare for the event.

For more details, donations of books and practical support ring Waltraud Jarrold on 01603 454799 or email richardjarrold@tiscali.co.uk

Rapping for Jesus



She's hip and cool with a brand of rapping that shouts its rhythmic faith vocals across the internet, Norwich prison and the East End of London.

In short, Michelle Hobart is at the cutting edge of the raw music scene with a poignant life-changing message for the masses, including the church.

At just 23, with a faith transition three years ago, she harnessed the beat for Jesus with a creative medley that includes: 'My Darkest Hour' and 'Sacrifice'. Her CD – The Cube of Life – launched last autumn, comes in the wake of her live performances.

Her inspiration has come from American rapper Kanye West. Michelle confesses to leaving the path of faith and venting her anger against injustice and bullying at school with some heavy-duty rapping lyrics. But the Christian artist, with a gospel message to

By SANDIE SHIRLEY

penetrate the mainstream market, helped put her back on track. Hearing the song 'Jesus Walks' watered the seeds of Michelle's childhood faith and answered the prayers of her ceaselessly praying mother, Marilyn.

Within a short time, Michelle was drawn to the Norwich Family Life Church. She stepped through the door while the church service was in progress to hear the story of the Lost Sheep.

"Jesus left the 99 sheep to look for the lost one. I had become lost and heartbroken and wanted to find God. I was allowed to taste the world and see how awful it was but He has turned everything around for good and now I am free and I can go on," said Michelle.

Michelle is reminded of that freedom every-

day. After making a faith commitment in September 2007, she had her arms tattooed with broken chains to record the event. "My life was once like a muddled Rubik Cube, twisted and mismatched but now its patterned and coloured aligned through my Saviour's forgiveness, mercy and love," she said.

"I scrapped all my old songs of hate and anger. My songs are now full of Jesus because, as one of my favourite songs says, even in my darkest hour I get my power from Him. My dream is to conquer the mainstream market with Christian music that tells the positive truth about Jesus and there is another album in the pipeline," she says.

Michelle performs under the name of Neme. The Cube of Life is available from HMV (Gentlemen's Walk, Norwich), iTunes and at www.myspace.com/littleneme. Further details email: neme.management@googlemail.com

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GOOD NEWS

FOR NORWICH & NORFOLK

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 ■ Churches, Christian organisations and individuals within Norwich and Norfolk are invited to send news, events and pictures which relate to the demonstration of the Gospel in social action, community care and evangelism generally. This will not only encourage those Christians involved in similar activities but also inform leaders in other churches who are contemplating similar forms of outreach.
 ■ The deadline for material for the special Celebrate Norwich & Norfolk edition is Friday April 16 and for the regular Harvest edition is Friday August 27.

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I am the way, the truth and the life

■ I asked a doctor: What is life? She replied: "I don't know. There are signs doctors use to diagnose death. But there is no medical definition of life."
 I asked a biologist: What is life? He replied: "I don't know. There are certain characteristics that describe it. But there is no biological definition of life."
 I asked the philosophers: What is life? And the answers came thick and fast: "It is knowledge. It is duty. It's whatever you choose. It's nothing. It's absurd. It's a joke."
 I asked the Buddha. He said: "Life is suffering." I asked the Prophet. He said: "Life is a test." I asked the Guru and he showed me a wheel; I asked David Beckham and he gave me a ball.
 The truth is, nobody can really, properly define what life actually is. Not the scientists, nor the philosophers, the wise or the ignorant; in spite of the fact that each one of us enjoys it for a while.
 They describe what it is like, dream of what



Tom Chapman pastor Surrey Chapel



it should be and proclaim what it is or isn't for. But who can say what it actually is? When Jesus came, he gave no definitions either. But he touched the lepers, befriended the sinners, calmed the storm and raised the dead. He spoke and lived the real thing. And in his Easter Passion for Life he embraced painful death to buy true life for us, and rose again to bring it to us. He showed that to know life is not to understand a theory, concept or a philosophy; it is not to obey a religion, perform a function or live a dream. To know life is to know a person. I asked Jesus: What is life? And he replied: "I am."

Norfolk author with a message about love

By SANDIE SHIRLEY

It is a year that looks full of promise for Dereham woman, Joanne Robinson. It comes with the launch of her new book and an informative website that builds on her continuing mission to help women as a counsellor, life coach and speaker.
 Having suffered emotional and financial heartbreak after a cycle of destructive relationships spanning more than 15 years, she is now helping other women break free from similar relationships. Joanne is founder of Donna Intera – Italian for whole woman. She is passionate about women finding the ultimate place to receive God's best in their friendships and romantic relationships
 "...He loves Me Not? (Last Word Publications, £7.99) embraces more than four years' work. It features short stories of my relationships and the effect of brokenness and hopelessness. It has helped me understand what real love was about and the lies and excuses I believed and put up with. It includes prayers and reflections and self-analysis through honesty," says Joanne.
 "With it has come Love in Season, a website for Christian women with devotionals, film clips and articles on relationships. It is always the right season for love with God. There is an inner thirst for Christ, as in the woman at the well, since he is the source of all our needs. He can love us to wholeness and build our self-esteem so that we do not isolate ourselves from community where God has placed us."
 She offers bespoke, interactive workshops in the Norfolk community and beyond. They are



Author Joanne Robinson.

ones. She stresses that you do not need bruises to be abused. It can be financial and emotional abuse, isolation and using the children, threats and intimidation.
 Joanne reached rock bottom with no job, finances and a destructive relationship with her live-in partner. Over the years she was drawn to abusive destructive relationships because she was desperate for love and validation after growing up with poor, abusive role models.
 "God's whole presence came into my heart when I decided to go into the unknown with him ten years ago. My life dramatically changed; I trained as a Christian counsellor and went to Canada to train as a life skills coach as I met people who led me in my ministry," says Joanne.
 "Coming out of the wilderness was a slow process but God has this beautiful way of weaving in growth and history in our life's tapestries. For the first time I was able to change the negative patterns in my life. My values and choices became so different. Now they don't lead to destruction but construction. With a developing new mindset I have learnt lessons to put more tools in my box to help other women do life successfully whether they are 18 or 70, single or married," she says.
weblinks:
www.donnaintera.co.uk
www.loveinseason.net
www.lastwordpublications.com



available to individuals, churches, local authorities, schools, prisons, women's groups and charities. Her 12-week course – the right step relationship course – is designed for all communities and is also bridging the gap in the help offered to women at a Christian drug rehabilitation centre. It includes the journey of making relationships and understanding the tell-tale signs of abusive

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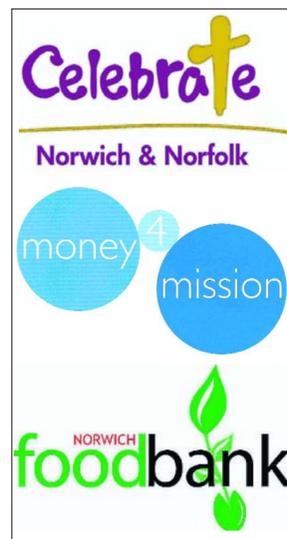
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John Betts is interviewed outside the Forum for a promotional Celebrate DVD.

Trio of initiatives launched in city

Three new Christian community initiatives were officially launched in Norwich on January 20 with the backing of Transforming Norwich.
 Money 4 Mission, Norwich Foodbank and Celebrate Norwich & Norfolk made their first public appearances at St Luke's Church on Aylsham Road in Norwich at an event attended by around 80 people.
 Urging people from the Christian community to get involved in these projects, John Betts, development officer of Transforming Norwich said: "All three projects have the potential to advance the kingdom of God. It's all about releasing Christians to build a fine community in and around Norwich."
 Celebrate Norwich & Norfolk is a major Christian event planned for Norwich in June following on from last year's successful Churches Community Action Fair. It aims to be an expression of all aspects of the life of the local Christian community and will take the form of a series of events planned around mid June in Norwich city centre.
 Celebrate development officer, John Betts, said: "The city centre will be buzzing with a whole raft of activities from serious debates to fun activities. The body of Christ together reaching out to the community without hiring an evangelist but using what we already have." Jill Gower, who is leading the prayer team, said: "This will be a poignant time for our city."
 A special Celebrate Norfolk edition of the Good News for Norwich & Norfolk tabloid Christian newspaper is being published to mark the event and act as its official programme. Look out



for your free copy from early May.
 Norwich Foodbank aims to help some of the 30,000 people in Greater Norwich who are living on the edge of poverty. Part of a national network of foodbanks, the Norwich project aims to give out nutritionally balanced emergency boxes of food to people in crisis who have nowhere else to turn.
 Norwich Foodbank trustee Frank O'Neill said it is an exciting new project which will distribute emergency two-day food parcels, to people in need. It is a Christian based project but available to everybody.
 He encouraged people to get

involved through Harvest festivals, church gifts, donations and collections from churches and businesses. An idea currently being launched is for regular events on Saturdays at supermarkets, where collectors give shoppers the opportunity to buy one extra item in their trolley to be donated to Foodbank.
 Potential supporters can be given a shopping list of needed items including UHT milk, cereals, tinned tomatoes and tea bags. Frank encourages churches and groups to sign up to be involved.
 Money 4 Mission aims to support, encourage and facilitate Christian social action in Norwich and Norfolk. Connected to established charity Dreams & Visions, Money 4 Mission aims to raise and distribute funds specifically for local initiatives and help simplify the process of giving for the work of Christian mission with Norfolk.
 Biddy Collyer, the driving force behind Money 4 Mission, said: "This is the destiny of Norwich and our plans for the city. There are lots of Christian ministries in our city that can pull together. Through these relationships we can bring light to Norwich. Money 4 Mission aims to provide sustainable income for our Christian agencies. It's really important that prayer and evangelism is at the centre of what we do."
CONTACTS:
 Foodbank and Celebrate, contact John Betts at 2john@johnbetts.fsnet.co.uk or on 01603 617905.
 Money 4 Mission, contact Biddy Collyer at biddycollyer@hotmail.com www.norwichfoodbank.co.uk www.celebratenorfolk.co.uk

in brief

Church in a cafe concept set for a Norwich debut

■ NORWICH: The concept of a church in a café could be coming to Norwich soon with interest already raised and a training event planned for April 24. LESLEY HENERY reports.
 ■ Cafechurch is an exciting new venture springing up across the UK. The idea, led by Rev Cid Latty and the Cafechurch Network, originated in Christchurch Baptist, Welwyn Garden City, two years ago. Currently there are over 50 cafechurches in towns and cities across the UK. Norwich could be next!
 Once a month, cafechurch take over a local coffee shop and host an event for the local community. Costa Coffee are keen to build links with the local community and are encouraging churches to set up a cafechurch in their UK stores, although alternative venues can also be used.
 All are welcome at cafechurch – it's an opportunity for the church to engage with the local community. To invite friends, family, neighbours and work colleagues – anyone wanting to talk about issues that matter to them, but who would not necessarily go to a 'normal' church service.
 Cafechurch gives people an opportunity to meet in a relaxed atmosphere to look at issues, such as the environment, debt, stress and relationships, from a Christian perspective.
 Each event is relaxed and informal with quizzes, interviews, discussion, live music, great coffee and good conversation! What an exciting way of bringing people together, to discover more about God. Often church is seen as being out of touch and boring. Cafechurch seeks to change all that.
 The Cafechurch Network has a responsibility to train and resource churches nationwide. They hold regular training days and once churches have attended a cafechurch training day, the Cafechurch Network will link them to their local store and resource them to begin cafechurch events. The vision of the Cafechurch Network is a big one, "One day we will see a cafechurch on every high street in every town, village and city."
 How exciting is that? We are keen to work with other churches and/or individuals to make cafechurch a reality and would love to hear from you.
 ■ A cafechurch training day has been organised for Saturday April 24 from 9am-4.30pm to include history, vision, worship and workshops. If you are interested in being involved, please contact New Hope Christian Centre, (01603) 617905 or e-mail the church office jenny.nhcc@virgin.net. Check out: www.cafechurch.net

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Norwich & Norfolk Christian news at www.networknorfolk.co.uk

Are you interested in writing

■ **Good News for Norwich & Norfolk** has vacancies for occasional writers both for the printed and web versions of the paper. If you have some writing experience, or would like to gain some, and are interested in the local Christian community, please e-mail editor Keith Morris at keith.morris@networknorwich.co.uk to arrange an informal chat.

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Footballer speaks of international experience

■ **NORFOLK:** Former Northern Ireland international teenage footballer Josh Walsh helped launch a series of 11-a-side games between Norfolk Christian Football league Under-18 teams at the UEA Sportspark on February 20.

Josh told players about his own international football experiences playing with the likes of Manchester United's Johnny Evans and against Arsenal's Cesc Fabregas.

He also spoke to Network Norfolk about his coaching work with Norwich City's Football in the Community programme and his new Christian sports project Ninety Plus Ministries.

Visit www.networknorfolk.co.uk to hear the audio interview www.ninetyplusministries.com



Former international footballer Josh Walsh.

Education is key for group future

By KEVIN GOTTS

It's all change at the Christian Magdalene Group project in Norwich which works with people caught up in the vice trade.

Project manager Canon Mair Talbot is moving on to become chaplain at the Colman Hospital and chairman, Rt Rev Peter Fox, has signalled a change in direction and ways of working.

Peter, a former Bishop of Papua New Guinea, has just completed his first year as chair of the charity and acknowledges that the sex trade has changed a great deal since the Magdalene Group was formed in 1992.

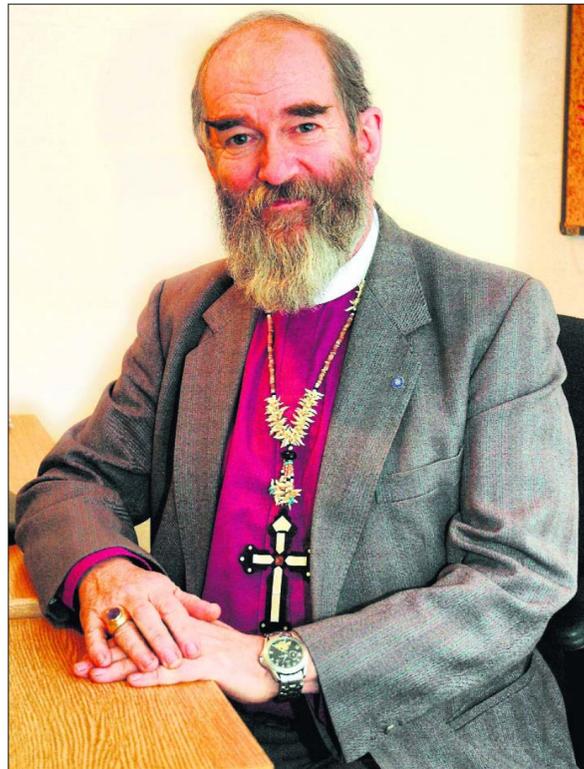
Peter, who is also vicar of Old Lakenham and Tuckswood, said: "Mobile telephones and internet communication have changed the way prostitutes work considerably and the Magdalene Group needs to adjust its way of working if it is to meet the challenge."

Education is the way forward he believes: "We will be doing far more in the way of education. More than ever the emphasis must be on equipping the vulnerable to resist exploitation and that begins with the way we educate the young; it continues in the way we offer viable alternatives to people who feel they have none. Lack of choice, lack of control, these are the hallmarks of true poverty."

He is concerned about the effect of an increasingly secular society on children: "People are being conditioned to think that sex does not matter, that children do not need a stable family background and that our only value comes from our spending power."

"The Magdalene Group is about promoting an opposite point of view that sex is too important to cheapen, that children thrive best where they have a strong and loving family background that we have value because we are God's children and we do not need money to have worth."

Volunteers play an active part in the Group's work, explains Peter: "We have to educate ourselves to be effective. To better understand people's situation properly. I think the training needed by our volunteers in the future



Magdalene Group chairman, Rt Rev Peter Fox.

will be more demanding than ever. We may have to settle for fewer volunteers from whom we ask a great deal more. It will not be a task that suits everybody. It will need very special people."

Other Christians can lend support, says Peter: "It can begin by learning more about what we do and telling others about it. I hope we will do a lot more to promote our work, by visiting church groups, schools, service organisations and telling people who we are, what we do and who we serve. Christian groups can give us an opportunity to set out our shop-window."

Peter voices his concern about a

growing problem: "We need to do something about trafficking of young people from country to country for prostitution, which is a really serious and growing problem. Imagine how vulnerable a person is when lured far from home and without money. This is the fate of many young people, who are lured into this country from overseas to find themselves enslaved to prostitution."

The charity is currently advertising for a full-time female project manager on www.networknorwich.co.uk

More details about Group can be found at www.magdalengroup.org

NEWS

Norwich & Norfolk Christian online shop at www.norwichchristian.co.uk

Archbishop set for poetic visit to Norwich

■ **NORFOLK:** The Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Revd Dr Rowan Williams, is to visit Norfolk to speak at the largest church in the Diocese - Norwich Cathedral - and at one of the smallest churches - All Saints', Sharrington.

On Saturday May 1, the Archbishop, will join prize-winning British poet, broadcaster and great-great-granddaughter of Charles Darwin, Ruth Padel, in conversation on the relationship between poetry and prayer. They will read a

selection of their own poetry, and discuss the need for both in our world today.

Following coffee, the Archbishop will answer questions from the audience. Big screens will ensure good views from around the Cathedral.

This Norwich Cathedral Institute event will take place in the Cathedral from 10am-12.30pm. The event is open to all, but admission is by ticket only. Tickets £5 (£3 concessions) are available on 01603 508050.

On the evening of Friday April 30, the Archbishop will reflect on the life of the rural church at All Saints', Sharrington. The invitation to speak came from Anne Sloman, a member of All Saints' and former Political Editor of the BBC, who has served for the past five years on the Archbishops' Council and now chairs the Church of England's Church Buildings Council which supports dioceses and parishes in their care of more than 16,000 church buildings.

news in brief

Trustee duo boost for Street Pastors

■ **NORFOLK** Street Pastors has received a boost with the appointment of two new trustees and news that members from 35 different churches are actively engaged in the project.

The two new trustees are Methodist local preacher and Police and Fire Service chaplain, Richard Whall and serving Police Sergeant and leader of the Norfolk branch of Christian Police Association, Rachel Thrussell.

Richard is a chartered accountant and, until recently, a Board member of YMCA Norfolk where he is still on the Community Impact Programmes Committee. Since 2003 he has been a chaplain to Norfolk Police and also more recently, to Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service.

"I have had a heart for the work of Street Pastors since I was invited to the first meeting in Norwich when Les Isaacs shared his vision," said Richard, "although being asked to be a trustee is my first real involvement. This and my other activities affirm my belief that the time has long gone when we, as church, can sit back and wait for the world to come to us on a Sunday morning."

Rachel is a Police Sergeant based at Bethel Street police station and some of her duties include working the night-time economy in the city centre on Friday and Saturday nights. Rachel has also recently re-established a branch of the Christian Police Association in Norfolk, which she leads. Rachel is also joining the Street Pastors Intercorers team.

"I am always pleased to see the presence of Street Pastors in the city when I am on duty and they can be a valuable source of extra help in a practical sense as well as the spiritual presence they bring to the streets. I have contacted Street Pastors when on duty to attend to a distressed female who had rowed with her partner.

"This is a valuable way for the churches to practically assist in the difficult job the police have during the busy party nights. Long may it grow and continue."

Project co-ordinator, Paul Rendell, recently counted up the number of churches represented in the work of Norfolk Street Pastors including Street Pastors, Prayer Pastors and trustees and the total was an impressive 35 from right across the whole denominational spectrum in Norfolk.



£100k transformation of conference centre

Belsey Bridge Conference Centre is providing new audio-visual, internet and accommodation facilities in a £100k transformation.

The Christian conference centre, 12 miles south of Norwich, at Ditchingham, was launched by the well-known Christian Conference Trust (CCT) at the end of 2009. CCT already operates two other successful Christian conference centres - The Hayes in Swanwick, Derbyshire and High Leigh in Hertfordshire. The addition of Belsey Bridge provides a Centre within East Anglia offering quality residential and day conference facilities for up to 110 delegates.

During the last few months the Centre has undergone a massive £100k transformation with conferences already benefiting from new audio-visual equipment in three conference halls and complimentary wireless internet available across the entire site. The three conference halls have been completed refurbished and are already proving very popular with groups. Plans for the next 12 months include an upgrade of the existing en-suite accommodation.

Grant Farrant, Business Development Manager for CCT, said: "These improvements ensure that the Centre is able to provide high quality conference facilities at an affordable price for the benefit of the Christian community across East Anglia."

"The staff team are committed to providing a Centre to which guests want to return again and again. The Centre has many strengths including excellent catering and an inspiring location. The team are committed to building on these strengths further which will be of major benefit to the Norfolk and Suffolk area."

Visit www.cct.org.uk/belseybridge to find out more about what the Centre has to offer, ring 01986 892133 or email belseybridge@cct.org.uk to book a time to visit.



An impressive setting and refurbished facilities at Belsey Bridge.

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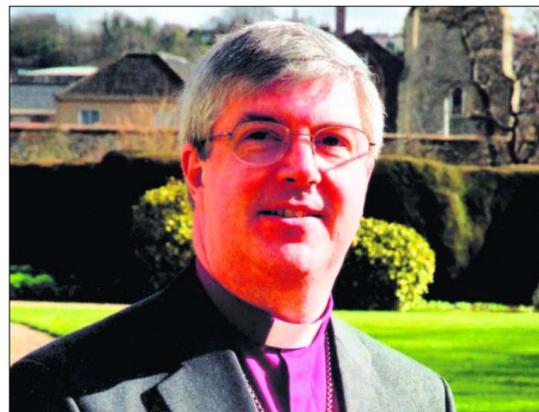
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Bishop's decade of hope

As the **Bishop of Norwich, the Right Rev Graham James**, celebrates ten years in the Diocese, he gave his views on the past ten years for the church in Norfolk, the challenges and successes and also his hopes and prayers for the next ten. **Keith Morris** asked the questions.



Q Has your role developed as you thought it might over last ten years?

A I believe that I am not just here for the church of England and to manage a religious organisation. I am here for the wider community as well, which is why I was instrumental in starting the Norfolk Community Foundation for example. It is why I am prepared to take risks and be a

Q What is the best thing about being Bishop of Norwich?

A It's the people to whom one ministers, the welcome you get all over the Diocese. It's sharing those moments when people are making very significant changes in their faith journey. It never ceases to inspire me. I have probably ordained over 120 new priests in the ten years. In Norfolk many of our communities still cherish the church in their midst. The boundaries between the church and the wider community are quite blurred here which is what I love about it. The church is deeply embedded in its life. I am privileged to be in a part of the country where despite the voices of secularism, God's voice is still heard and honoured.

sponsor of the Open Academy. It is why I am willing to work across the boundaries of the churches in partnership.

I suppose your role also changes as people get to know you and trust you. In the Diocese, of the 300 active clergy at least 200 of them have been ordained by me or have come into the Diocese in my time here.

Q What is the biggest change in the structure and shape of the church over the past ten years?

A My sense of our churches is that there is a recognition always of the fragility that comes with – if you don't convert the next generation there will not be a living church on earth.

There is an increasing passion for youth work. The number of youth workers is now around 20 to 30 employed in the parishes compared to just two or three, ten years ago. There is a commitment to growth in discipleship, service and numbers.

Q How do you react to the apparent decline in church attendances?

A I am not sure that the church has declined in size. The decline in even Sunday congregations is modest. What has changed is the pattern of people's attendance at services which has changed enormously.

Not as many people are there every week, but more people come at certain festival such as Christmas and they will come when they are responding to a need, such as services for people who are bereaved.

The strength of the church does not simply lie in Sunday congregations. Just remember that there are far more communicants in just the Church of England on a wet Sunday in February than there

are members of the three main political parties in total.

Q What most excites you about the church in Norfolk today?

A It is the fact that our tradition has been around for hundreds of years, yet most of our parishes are prepared to rethink their mission for the present day. Fresh Expressions of church and renewed ways of our congregations reaching out to their communities suggest that now is a rather exciting time to be in the Church of England, despite what you might read in the national press. Because people are rethinking how their Christian commitment is going to be lived both in their churches and in their daily lives.

Q What is the biggest challenge facing the church?

A One of the challenges which has not been met very well is that of militant and vigorous atheism which has been renewed through the writings of Richard Dawkins and others. It is an incredibly unsophisticated attack on religion in general. It brands all faith as irrational, fanatical, narrow and bigoted.

The cathedral behind us is not the product of a bigoted mind but one of an expansive faith, one which cherishes beauty and subtlety and a vigorous intellectual life.

We must not let Christianity simply become a sentimental and emotional religion – it has got to have intellectual content.

How do you speak of God intelligently to those who have dismissed God as not even worth thinking about?

They will of course discover that they have needs which are deeply spiritual at some stage but they

won't then have the resources to deal with them.

Q Do you think we will see a woman bishop in the Church of England in the next ten years?

A No. But my suspicion is that in ten to 20 years time we will, partly because the legislation will take that long to get into place. I want to see women bishops, but what I don't want to see are people in different traditions within our church being unchurched. It is how we can live in the same church with two quite different opinions on this.

Q How do you view calls for greater unity between different parts of the Christian church?

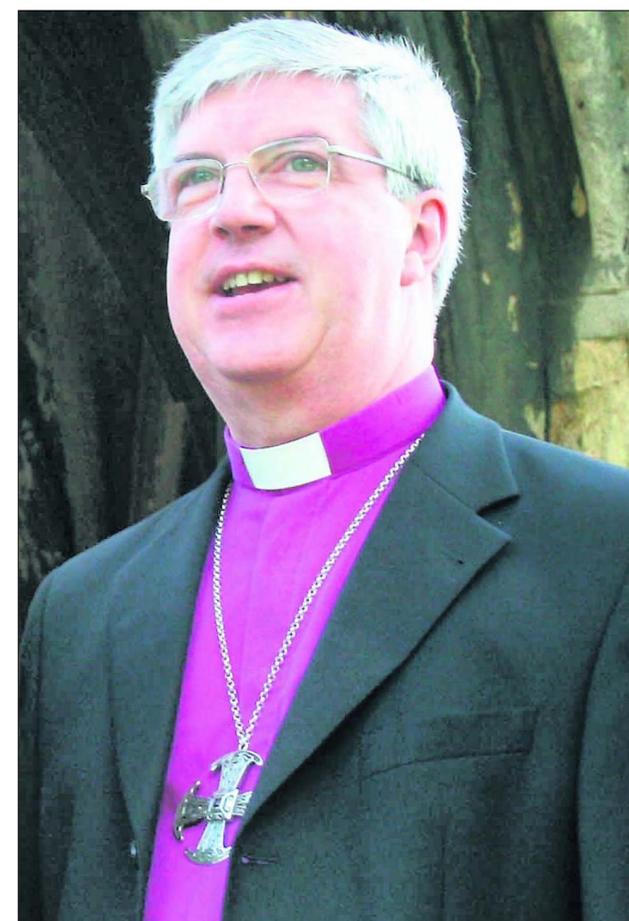
A I think we have all sorts of good examples of co-operation between different churches and church leaders in this Diocese. I think, however, that the impetus for union schemes between different churches is gone.

But what I do sense is that, in terms of service to the community and trust and respect of one another, the communion between different churches is greater than it has ever been.

Q What do you think the church will look like in another ten years time?

A From the outside I am not sure it will look hugely different. What I pray is that it will be a body which is more vigorous, more loving, more mission-centred and which has grown in depth of discipleship, faithfulness to Christ, in service to the wider community and in numbers. The sort of growth which can begin to transform society.

■ The full transcript of the interview can be found on www.networknorfolk.co.uk



Rt Rev Graham James, Bishop of Norwich.

news in brief

International youth choir visits Norfolk

■ **CROMER/NORWICH:** Over 200 young voices from Eurochor will perform at churches in Cromer and Norwich for a special Easter visit as part of the Passion for Life programme. The choir's exciting arrangements and different languages make for a unique outreach event.

Eurochor is a large youth choir and orchestra of 16-20 year old Christians from various European countries. They perform many concerts each year in different countries including Switzerland, Holland, Germany, France and the UK singing Christian hymns and songs in various languages.

Their primary intention is to share their faith and reach out to others.

Many people have very happy memories of their last visit to Norfolk in November 2008. One comment overheard, which summed up many opinions, "If I had only known it was this good I would have brought my friends and relations".

This is an opportunity to bring your friends and neighbours to a relaxed concert performed to a professional standard. Admission is free of charge.

Norwich Central Baptist Church, Duke Street, Norwich NR3 3AP on Saturday April 3, at 7.30pm.

Cromer Parish Church, Church Street, Cromer, NR27 9AE on Sunday April 4 at 6.30pm

Innovative farm project

■ **DISS:** An innovative South Norfolk Christian project has been reaching out to young people facing difficult social issues with the help of chicks, goats, ducklings and a Dexter cow.

Kadesh Community Farm is a project run from Diss Community Church and has received funding from Christian community trust Dreams and Visions.

The project started in February 2009 when the farmland was acquired in Palgrave near Diss. A group of 35 young people from local churches and from Robinswood Church, in Gloucester, along with members of the local community all pitched in to begin clearing the site.

It now welcomes local youth groups, job seekers and others: <http://kadeshcommunityfarm.blogspot.com/>

New church is planted

■ **THETFORD:** A new church has been planted and is starting to grow in a Norfolk town with the help of Facebook, some puppets and young people engaged in social action.

Nigel and Glenna Worth, from Braintree are joining together with Dan and Annette Morgan to establish a New Frontiers congregation in Thetford.

On March 27 they are holding a barn dance in Thetford Guildhall and a Family Fun Day will follow in the summer. Regular Sunday meetings are planned from October. www.thetfordchurchplant.com

Bringing back the prodigals

By PETER BARNES

■ **NORWICH:** International Christian communicator, Jeff Lucas, was in Norwich earlier this month as part of a week-long UK tour with the West Midlands based Saltmine Theatre Company.

Billed as a time of chat, interviews, comedy, music and drama, a packed audience at Norwich Central Baptist Church were treated to an emotional and thought-provoking evening containing all those ingredients.

Renowned for his clear teaching and preaching, Jeff focused on the chaotic situations and emotions which families of 'prodigals' face. Using humour and pathos he discussed the struggles and hopes raised in his best selling book Will Your Prodigal Come Home?

"If you have had your heart broken by a prodigal, you know the pain of being hurt or disappointed by a loved one and the utter despair of seeing them turn away from Christ and the Cross, is there a way to guide the prodigal home?"

Lucas acknowledged that every prodigal is different. "Some have defied God; some have turned to drink, drugs and crime;



Jeff Lucas, right, is interviewed by Michael Taylor in Norwich.

others are still in church pews with hearts closed to Jesus."

Clearly there are no easy answers, he continued, but through understanding, insight into the emotions that form within families and an acknowledgement of the power of prayer, Jeff delivered a message that was both challenging and comforting.

The Bible story of The Prodigal Son was illustrated with an excellent drama sketch by the Saltmine Theatre Company who

also delivered a feast of wit and humour in their dialogues and interviews.

As well as being a radio broadcaster, the author of 14 books and a number of study guides and pamphlets, Jeff is also part of the Spring Harvest Leadership team. He is an ambassador for Compassion, a charity working to help children in poverty. He and wife Kay live in Colorado, USA where he holds teaches and preaches in the 10,000-strong Timberline Church at Fort Collins.

Miracle turnaround for Norfolk mission girl Ruth

By SANDIE SHIRLEY

■ **WYMONDHAM** Christian couple, Sylvia and David Barker nursed their daughter through the tears, heartache and isolation of ME to see a miracle turnaround a decade later as she became an overseas mission worker.

Ruth was a schoolgirl of 13 when she contracted glandular fever, but within a few short weeks she was diagnosed with ME. It disrupted her education and her social life.

"Sometimes Ruth could only do a few hours of school and I had to be on call to bring her home," says Sylvia, who carried her and sustained her throughout the illness.

"She managed four GCSEs and with support from the headmaster and staff at Wymondham High School, she took three A levels and later gained a degree in Travel and Tourism Management," she says.

During those dark days, Ruth fought for faith and health through the disease that attacks

the immune system and brings terrible fatigue. Now she is healed and restored.

January 2010 marked the first year anniversary of her work for Scripture Union, Soul Survivor and her Heartland Church in Durban, South Africa. Armed with the winning power of faith and determination she continues her outreach among the street children in the poor townships and is PA to her church pastor.

For the former teenager, who had almost given up on life and questioned her future, it is a miracle turnaround, explains father David.

Furthermore, it comes in the wake of financial challenge and the trauma of a break-in when armed men took her money, credit cards and belongings before Christmas.

It could have caused a health set-back, since stress is often a trigger to the ME, explained David, but his daughter

continues undaunted.

In a letter to her parents' Wymondham Hope Community Church, in response to their financial support after the robbery, she writes:

"God was with us that night and protected us from harm. Without him to protect us and without our faith to pray during the whole thing, I don't think it would have been such a miraculous and happy story. I truly love this place despite its faults and dramas.

"Until you visit you cannot imagine how special the people are and how much work needs to be done for them to find God in the midst of their heartache and troubles.

"I still feel completely safe living here and I don't feel fearful at all. Obviously it has been a reality check but it has also been an amazing time of trusting God in a very bad situation and seeing many positive things come from it."

For more information: www.ruthindurban.spaces.live.com



Ruth Barker in South Africa.

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A passion for Jesus



By TOM CHAPMAN

What could a retired general, a Chinese accountancy student, an international cricketer, the boss of an advertising agency, a university professor and a full-time housewife all have in common?

The answer is a Passion for Life. They – and many others – have been giving their testimonies about the impact Jesus Christ has made upon them.

Five Norwich churches, Anglican, Baptist and Free, representing some 800 people, have been working together this March in a joint mission to make Christ's passion for life known.

Some events – like international cricketer Henry Olunga and ex British Army chief General Sir Richard Dannatt – have been well known, highly credible figures who have spoken to hundreds of people in large venues. Other highlights have included:

- a praise party packed with children and families worshipping Jesus
- a beach trip with folk music, food and 200 students gathered round a bonfire
- an international service with some 50 guests witnessing their four friends being baptised
- an evening of top-quality musical entertainment and a gospel message at the



A beach barbecue, above, and General Sir Richard Dannatt, right.

Ramada Jarvis Hotel
■ a sports quiz and presentation with Christians in Sport

But the vast majority of the scores of events had not involved large venues or professional speakers. They have been organised by smaller groups within churches – seniors clubs, housegroups, toddler groups

and activity groups, in church halls, pub restaurants and homes.

And the message has come from ordinary Christians, sharing their particular passion with perhaps just a handful of people in a living room. By the end of this month we estimate that some 800 people – one for every member of our churches – will have heard

about Jesus in a context in which they are comfortable. How many will actually believe it, we don't know, of course – that's up to him. But we are already hearing reports of people coming to faith this month.

Why did we choose this strategy? Well there is nothing wrong with big evangelistic meetings – we have two coming up. In other parts of the country Passion for Life has taken that route.

But in Norwich our vision has been to empower the people of God to share their passion for themselves, in contexts they and their friends are comfortable, with a natural continuity between the special event and everyday church life. It's not a centralised push, but something every member of our churches owns for themselves – and carries on afterwards.

Remaining events

■ **Friday 26 March, 7.30 pm: A Passion for Youth with NYFC** – an ideal event for 11-19s with a challenging message from YFC leader Gavin Calver. Bring your youth group!

■ **Saturday 27 March, 7.30 pm: A Passion for Life: Find Yours** – for adults with music, testimonies and a message from Norwich evangelist Toby Skipper. Ring 01603 619555 or e-mail: info@apassionforlifenorwich.org.uk. www.apassionforlifenorwich.org.uk

Faith is inspiration

By SANDIE SHIRLEY

The new president of Norwich's Aglow International is set to empower women to meet their God-given calls in life.

Sharon Plummer has taken the helm at the women's ministry and is helping to bring re-generation. It comes with a host of future ground-breaking initiatives in a bid to embrace women of all cultures and ages.

The Thetford-based YMCA worker and Norwich Street Pastor, officially took up office in January after three months in an interim role. The single mother of two has been at the sharp end of the community for the last three years ministering to hurting, lonely youngsters on the pavements of Norwich but she also has a big heart for women. Together with her two team members, Sharon helps host a monthly event with inspiring speakers to build faith and relationships.

Aglow International supports and encourages all women to faith. The organisation was birthed in the 1960s with a handful of praying women from Seattle, America. Today thousands of women are catching their vision across

upteen countries and every continent. Sharon is building on that heritage. The meetings are tailored for today's women whether they are seventy something grandmothers, business women or those struggling with life's issues.

"Each month we have some women coming who are struggling with addictions and other life



Sharon Plummer, new president of Norwich Aglow International.

issues. They include some women from a Christian rehabilitation centre. God has been bringing them in and one day I believe they will become future speakers in the Aglow chapters, sharing messages of life-changing testimonies."

The new Aglow programme will include informal coffee mornings at the city's Starbucks to hear life-changing talks. A series of

workshops for some of its members to showcase their resources as a life coach, counsellor and drama healing ministry for example are in the pipeline. There also are plans to launch Generation Aglow for 18-30s as an offshoot of the current organisation.

"I want women of all ages to be empowered for God, to be built-up and feel loved and cared for so

they have the courage and encouragement to revisit the dreams and desires that God has laid on their hearts," says Sharon, who was lost and heartbroken after a divorce seven years ago. "I felt as if life was passing me by; the faith I had as I was growing up seemed almost a distant memory. I found it hard to cry out to God since I felt I did not deserve to be listened to, I became unreachable and did not love myself so felt no-one else could."

Six years ago Sharon was drinking to numb the pain but felt even emptier until a trip to Australia turned her life around. During a meeting five years ago the pastor spoke about not letting the past affect the future and Sharon was reduced to tears. "I heard Jesus say: 'let me carry all your cares and take care of you.' For the first time in years, I felt relief, peace and an overwhelming feeling of being loved. That night Jesus wiped the slate clear, he gave me hope. Since then I have been amazed at the doors God has opened for me."

The regular Aglow evenings will include a variety of inspirational speakers for 2010 including husband and wife musicians who met on the streets and married, missionary Pat Atkinson and Doreen Davies who has worked amongst the London outcasts and helped pioneer a mission in the Balkans.

Monthly meetings, with an optional meal, are held at 7pm on the fourth Tuesday at the Norwich Holiday Inn, Ipswich Road.

For more details telephone: 01953 454606 or e-mail: roseofsharon2911@yahoo.co.uk

news in brief

Lighthouses of prayer

■ **NORFOLK** Call to Prayer is relaunching its Lighthouses of Prayer initiative and monthly newsletter to encourage local Christians to pray for local ministries, churches and events.

Director Jill Gower said: "During the Just Ten Mission with J. John in 2002, God raised up 113 Lighthouses of Prayer; these very diverse groups gave significant prayer cover to this event and we believe that the time has come to re-launch them."

"There are so many initiatives coming up, including Celebrate, which has the potential to be a major evangelistic event, the recently launched Foodbank and The Father's Heart Conference in Ashill in May. We feel the time has come to see the Lighthouses of Prayer re-established as we have much to pray about. Also to pray for our wonderful ministries in the area which are doing such great work."

"With this in mind we are looking for Lighthouses of Prayer to gather and they can be, as before, very diverse in nature. Some will be within churches, others people gathering across the churches in their region and some may be existing prayer groups."

Once a month, Lighthouses are invited to join together for a combined prayer meeting at the Octagon, All Saints Church, The Street, Poringland from 7pm.

For more information contact Jill on jill@call2prayer.co.uk or 01508 491770.

Church appoints family worker

■ **NORWICH:** A city church has appointed a new family worker to help serve its local community and the move has received a positive response from local schools, Police and other public organisations.

Approximately a year ago, Meadow Way Chapel in Hellesdon felt it was appropriate to respond to the needs in their locality by appointing a Family Worker to serve the community.

Shelley Logan, a trained nursery nurse and schools worker, has now been appointed and, along with her husband Paul, moved into the area at the start of January to take up the role.

She is using her first couple of months in the role speaking to schools, local police, public bodies and organisations already working in the area, seeking the best ways to support families.

Contact: shelleylogan@live.co.uk

Norwich Christian Resource Centre
Network Norwich & Norfolk

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An evening with Professor Brian Thorne
Friday 9 April 7pm

The Christian author from Norwich will speak on the topic of self worth and the vital difference between selfishness and self love.

The talk is from 7 - 8pm followed by two course meal with tea/coffee at the Norwich Christian Resource Centre, St Michael-at-Plea church, Redwell street, Norwich, NR2 4SN. Tickets £15 or £3 for talk only.

To book call 01603 766978 or email norwichcrc@btconnect.com

Brian Thorne's Books will be on sale:



Infinitely Beloved: The Challenge of Divine Intimacy
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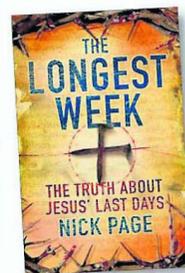
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A fascinating and intensely personal attempt to enter into the mind and heart of Jesus during his passion and crucifixion. New edition.



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The Longest Week: The truth about Jesus' Last Days
by Nick Page

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28 tracks including Stuart Townend,

Tim Hughes, Lou Fellingham, Matt Redman & Delirious

RRP £14.99 online price: £12.99



Dozens of North Norfolk churches to join in mission

■ **NORTH NORFOLK:** Dozens of churches in Aylsham, N Walsham and the Bure Valley in North Norfolk will be joining together to engage in a week of mission and outreach events from June 6-13 called God4U.

Churches Together in both Aylsham and in North Walsham have got right behind the mission which is being spearheaded by Robin Wilding, minister of the Emmanuel Baptist Church in Aylsham.

Robin said: "The week should involve activities for youth and adults, to stir thought and interest, but also to give opportunities in both small and large venues for people to hear

the gospel.

"For me the great joy of this event is seeing so many different church denominations getting involved together. People cannot say we will ignore the church because its divided – we demonstrate through this that we may be different in style but we are united in our love for God and desire to make him known."

Groups from local churches will be working alongside Through Faith Missions, who will bring teams of trained volunteer evangelists with them. Through Faith Missions is the organisation behind Walk of a 1000 men, headed up by Daniel Cozens.

Robin said: "The mission has grown on us. We will be using teams from Through Faith Missions in Aylsham and the surrounding Wesleyan Reform chapels, North Walsham and the Bure Valley Benefice. And recently the Scarrowbeck group of parishes has asked to be involved. The idea of the mission is to make opportunities to encourage friends, neighbours, and contacts to explore more deeply the faith we profess and enjoy."

The 24 churches involved include the Salvation Army, New Frontiers, Methodist, Baptist, Anglican, Roman Catholic and Brethren Chapel.

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Rent hike threat to drop-in centre

■ The Christian drop-in All Saints' Centre, in Norwich, is facing an uncertain future after a dramatic rent increase from its landlords and is appealing for support for its vital work. Trustee Rev Barry Furness reports.

■ The All Saints Centre greets 2010 with an uncertain future but with faith in its heart.

Having celebrated its 30th anniversary last year, and become an important and respected part of Norwich life over that 30 years, serving the people of, and visitors to, Norwich in so many ways, a dramatic rent increase from landlords The Norwich Historic Churches Trust has come as rather a blow.

With its current lease expiring in March, the Trustees have been considering its future and in spite of financial difficulties agree that it must continue, particularly as it is a Christian Centre and we know that with God all things are possible.

All Saints' Centre is a beacon of God's love in the centre of Norwich, and a place where Christians of all



All Saints volunteer chef Paul behind the servery.

denominations, or none, can serve the community in the name of Christ. It cannot therefore hide its light under a bushel by moving to back-street premises; nor can it close its doors, as it is a much needed and used city centre facility. So to the future!

The Trustees continue to look for grants, openings for publicity and support from the community and are moving on in faith. There are plans for a service of re-dedication, with patron Bishop Graham James, on Saturday April 15, when we shall be putting the next five years' lease in God's hands

and committing ourselves to the future.

Meanwhile we hope that, if you haven't already been in, you will do so. We serve delicious, low-cost, home-cooked lunches and provide a warm, comfortable and welcoming venue in the city.

We are also looking for more volunteers to play a role in the future of the centre

For more details please do visit our website or come in and see us; we are situated in All Saints Church, opposite John Lewis and are open every day!

■ www.allsaintsnorwich.org.uk



An outside, and below inside, view of the new Narthex.

New era as £2.8m project is completed

The centenary of Norwich's Roman Catholic Cathedral is being celebrated with a year-long programme of activities and the opening of the new Narthex £2.85m community facilities centre.

The Narthex project officially opened on March 16 and is an extension to the Grade I listed building that will provide community and learning facilities that include a main hall, a café, shop, exhibition space and educational facilities.

The Narthex is hoped to attract a new wave of interest in St John's Roman Catholic Cathedral from the city and beyond.

The centenary celebrations formally got under way on Sunday January 3 with an inauguration service by Bishop Michael Evans, leader of the Catholic community in East Anglia.

The cathedral's official 100th birthday will be on December 8, but the centenary celebrations will reach their peak with a Day of Celebration and Thanksgiving on June 24, the feast day for St John the Baptist.

Events over the year include a flower festival, a series of concerts and a range of social events.

Father James Walsh, the Dean of St John's, said: "I want this year to be truly memorable for the people of Norwich and throughout East Anglia as we embark on these celebrations.

"St John's is one

By KEITH MORRIS

of the iconic buildings in the city with a unique character, it is also the spiritual home to a large and thriving congregation with a wonderful mix of cultures and nationalities.

"Throughout 2010 we will be offering a warm welcome to visitors, especially to the people of Norwich who have not yet come through the doors. It will be a time for us to remember our past with gratitude, to celebrate our present with enjoyment and to look forward to our future with hope."

St John's is the second largest Catholic cathedral in the UK. After nearly a century as the parish church of the Catholic community in Norwich it became the mother church of the new diocese of East Anglia in 1976.

Norwich is one of the few English cities to have two cathedrals and, over the last 30 years, they have grown closer in a spiritual and practical partnership.

The Narthex will provide a

new focus for visitors to the cathedral. It will offer a place to look and learn, to visit and find out about the history of the cathedral. The project will improve physical and intellectual access to the cathedral, providing a wonderful welcome for all who visit and worship here. It will enable the cathedral to play a fuller part in the life of the region.

The Narthex will add some 400 square metres to the Cathedral complex, providing much-needed social, educational and interpretative space and a new, level access into the Cathedral.

As part of the project the existing community facilities will be extended and refurbished. Over 85% of the total cost of £2.85 million has already been raised. The Narthex will enable the Cathedral team to develop and respond to four vital aspects of the life of the Cathedral: Building cohesive communities, Youth and Education, Adding to the cultural life of Norwich and East Anglia and Protecting and preserving our heritage.



Prom praise sounds fill Norwich hall

■ A hugely popular orchestra from London consumed every 'inch of space' in St Andrew's Hall on March 13 with a heart-beating, foot-tapping mixture of secular and sacred music.

Under the direction and baton of Noel Tredinnick, the All Souls Orchestra thrilled a packed auditorium with pieces by Eric Coates, Rossini, Bizet, Boeliman and Haydn Wood among others.

It was almost impossible to pick a favourite item from a wide and varied selection but the beautiful voice of Sarah Vander Ploeg, an American lyric soprano singing Eagles Wings and Oh who am I?, just nudged top spot from saxophonist Sarah Lawson playing Glazounov's Concerto and organist Richard Lennox' rendering of Toccata from Suite Gothique.

An attractive feature characterising this concert was the involvement of local singers. The combined choir of over 100 voices drawn from 20 different churches in the Greater Norwich area tackled with distinction choral music, which included classics by Mozart and Haydn and modern writers Stuart Townend, Graham Kendrick and Roger Jones.

The All Souls Orchestra is part of the Langham Arts Trust and the proceeds from the concert are in support of the Prom Praise for Schools Project.



The programme was compered by Hugh Palmer, currently Rector of All Souls Church, but formerly a Curate serving under Canon

Gordon Bridger at Holy Trinity Church in Norwich. Review by Peter Barnes

Global day of prayer

Norwich and Norfolk will once again be part of the world's largest prayer meeting on Pentecost Sunday, May 23, which marks the 10th anniversary of the Global Day of Prayer (GDOP).

Organisers hope that all the nations of the World will be participating in this incredible event and millions will gather worldwide to be part of a vast 24-hour wave of prayer starting as dawn breaks in New Zealand, flowing through Australasia, Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas and finishing in Samoa!

Norfolk and Norwich will be taking part for the fourth consecutive year and organisers are hoping that the Cathedral, which holds at least 1000 people, will be full this year with young and old uniting in prayer and praise.

Norwich administrator, Hilary Oliver, said: "There will be opportunities to pray for local and national issues, together in small groups or to pray individually, whatever you are comfortable in doing. All ages are welcome and we actively invite you to bring your children to be part of this event, there will be a separate programme for them but they will also participate in the main event.

"Now, perhaps more than at any time in our recent history, as we see so many of our Christian values being eroded and our liberty to share and preach the gospel being threatened, we need to gather together and ask God to move on our behalf to change the direction this nation is heading in," said Hilary.

"During World War II it is believed that daily gatherings of people in this nation in prayer changed the direction and outcome of the War. Let us take this opportunity to make a difference now and be part of a concerted, united prayer event for our nation."

Every nation at every GDOP event prays the same prayer although the events are vastly different as they each have a flavour of the local community and gather in different



A scene from last year's GDOP event in Norwich Cathedral.

venues. Some events are held in football stadium, some in churches, some in the open air, some in homes, some in cathedrals.

"Imagine the unity amongst the body of Christ as we cry out together, using the same words, to our Father in Heaven to heal our land and our world," said Hilary. "Last year 220 nations participated and it is anticipated that there will be more events held among the nations involving more people as the word spreads and people respond to the resounding call to 'pray globally, gather locally'.

"God TV covers the event and no doubt some have watched and seen some of the large meetings across the world. So come and be

part of the largest prayer meeting in the world by coming to Norwich Cathedral at 6.30 pm on Sunday May 23, and join your prayers with millions of others making a change in the spiritual climate of our nation and our world."

Car parking will be no problem as, in addition to parking available in the Cathedral grounds, visitors are able to use the Cathedral's overflow car park on Browne's Meadow which has direct access into the Cathedral precincts.

For further information and to obtain leaflets about the event please contact administrator Hilary Oliver: phone 01603 620444 or email: hilary.oliver@nflc.org.uk or www.globaldayofprayer.com/videos.html

YMCA's £4.2m Norwich flats plan gets the green light

■ NORWICH: YMCA Norfolk's plan to build 40 self-contained flats for young homeless people in Norwich city centre has been given the green light to go ahead with the approval of planning permission from Norwich City Council on February 4.

Last July, the YMCA Norfolk Board gave the go-ahead to explore the £4.2m plan to redevelop the rear part of the current YMCA accommodation on St Giles Street in Norwich and build 40 self-contained flats for young homeless people in its place. In October the project was granted £2.25m from the Homes and Communities Agency.

The development will see part of the current buildings on the Bethel Street side demolished, leaving the frontage on St Giles intact. The new facility would provide move-on accommodation to help prepare young people for independent living.

Each self-contained flat will have a living room/bedroom, a kitchen and a bathroom.

There will be shared communal facilities such as a lounge, and somewhere to provide training in life skills such as cooking and IT. The YMCA will also provide support staff who can give advice and guidance to encourage young people into work and training.

YMCA Norfolk CEO, Tim Sweeting, said: "I am delighted that we have been granted planning permission, as it will enable us to

provide much-needed supported accommodation for both young men and women who are looking to become self-supporting and will be the last step on their journey before moving on to independent living."

"We are seeing an increase in the numbers requiring our services and we are committed to doing everything we can to help young people when they need it most. This housing will provide young people with crucial move-on accommodation from our Central YMCA facility and allow us to help a much great number of young people."

"Young people will be given a place first at the Central YMCA where they can be assessed. Those who show they are committed to developing themselves and moving forward will be offered the opportunity to live in one of the flats on Bethel Street, for a maximum of two years," said Tim.

Some 40 bedrooms and offices in the older front part of the existing St Giles YMCA hostel will remain in use throughout the building phase to cater for existing residents.

There is a target completion date of the end of 2011.

If you want to find out more or make a donation please contact Susie Knights on 07967 741103 or e-mail susieknights@ymca-norfolk.org.uk or visit www.ymca-norfolk.org.uk

events in brief

Gospel choir date at Norwich Cathedral

■ NORWICH: Heavenly sounds from the Norwich Youth for Christ Gospel Choir will fill Norwich Cathedral on Saturday May 15. The evening will also include the Bishop of Norwich and Roy Crowne, former Director of British Youth for Christ.

The popular NYFC Gospel Choir will present an uplifting evening of music in the beautiful and majestic setting of Norwich Cathedral from 7pm.

The Bishop of Norwich, the Right Revd Graham James is hosting what is sure to be a vibrant evening full of inspiration, including a chance to hear from special guest Roy Crowne, who is also Vice-President of British Youth for Christ.

NYFC Gospel Choir is made up of young people from all over Norfolk and has been growing not only in size, but in their reputation for putting smiles on the faces of all those who see them, so book your tickets early to avoid disappointment.

Schools Worker Heather Feltham, who leads NYFC Gospel Choir said: "The special thing about this choir is the community aspect and creating a place where young people can feel a sense of identity, purpose and belonging within the framework of God's love.

"It is hard to describe how wonderful it has been to see what God has done and is doing through this project and in the lives of the young people who attend. Please come and see for yourself, and to support these amazing young people who are very excited about this big event in the choir's calendar. It should be a fantastic event!"

Tickets at £8 (£5 concessions) are now available from the Network Norfolk online shop, at www.networknorfolk.co.uk/shop, Norwich Cathedral or Norwich Youth For Christ (01603) 620678 subject to availability.

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Norwich church helps Haiti earthquake victims

NORWICH: A city church has committed itself to helping, praying for and raising money for earthquake victims in Haiti after one of its members recently returned from helping to build an orphanage and hospital in the stricken country.

On hearing the terrible news, Norwich Gateway Vineyard church dedicated its whole Sunday service to Haiti, led by member Annie Rancecroft. Annie is a senior paediatric physiotherapist at the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital, who has recently been in the earthquake-struck country. By the end of the service £2500 had been raised.

They also staged a Pancake Day Haiti Fundraiser on Shrove Tuesday to raise more cash.

At New Wine in 2008, Annie, aged 28, and others from Gateway, met a couple who are establishing a hospital and orphanage in Haiti. Since then Annie has been out twice, the last time for six weeks in the autumn.

Gateway church leader, Hannah Deal, said: "We have previously

By KEITH MORRIS

given money to build furniture suitable for the physical development of children with disabilities who Annie met on her first visit and pray for the work.

"When the earthquake happened we felt it right to respond. Since January we have started a new series on Sundays called 'Is your gospel too small?' Looking at the life of Jesus and how his message was life and community transforming and yet so often we've watered it down. The earthquake gave us an immediate opportunity to act.

"Annie shared about Haiti, the country, the people, the poverty and the hospital and orphanage and the work they are doing post earthquake. We prayed for the people and took an offering.

Annie returned twice to Haiti last year to continue the work at the hospital and help families learn to live with disabilities.

The hospital, about 70 miles north of Port-au-Prince where the

earthquake struck, is not open yet but is now being used to treat earthquake refugees seeking urgent medical treatment.

Annie's friends, who run the hospital, have told her it is a "living hell" in Haiti. She said: "It is absolutely heartbreaking to see what is happening out there. Before the earthquake people were living in the most basic conditions but now it is unthinkable what is happening to them."

"People live in primitive shacks surrounded by waste and rubble. Most do not work and 98pc of the country has been deforested. It is extremely depressing. Roads are barely-constructed and full of pot-holes so it takes ages to travel anywhere, which is why it must be such a struggle to get aid to them."

Haiti's government has been plagued by corruption since the beginning of its existence, and voodoo – comprising black magic curses – makes up much of the substance of Haitian religion.

To make a hospital donation visit: www.haitihospitalappeal.org



Norwich paediatric physiotherapist and Haiti hospital volunteer, Annie Rancecroft.

Sleep out raises homeless issue



Pictured are rough sleepers at the YMCA Norfolk Sleep Easy event, including chief executive, Tim Sweeting, left.



Over 20 people slept in cardboard boxes outside the YMCA on St Giles St in Norwich on January 30, despite freezing temperatures and frost on the ground, to draw attention to the problem of homelessness.

Organised by YMCA Norfolk, the Sleep Easy event was one of a dozen or so similar events at different YMCAs around the country.

YMCA Norfolk chief executive Tim Sweeting was joined by staff, supporters, friends and even a guide dog, who accompanied YMCA trustee Rev Simon Stokes on the sleep out.

The sleep out took place in a car park behind the current YMCA on St Giles St in Norwich on the site where YMCA Norfolk plans to build 40 self-contained flats for young homeless people.

Participants, were sponsored to help build the flats and support the work of YMCA Norfolk, which provides a warm bed to 231 young people in supported accommodation across the county each night and they raised over £3,000.

The rough sleepers were kept warm by building shelters out of cardboard boxes, as well as sleeping bags and plastic sheeting and lots of tea, coffee and hot soup.

The whole 12-hour Sleep Easy was covered by a live web cam so that supporters and families could make sure the sleepers did not sneak inside into the warm.

At the end, Tim Sweeting said: "I feel tired but elated. It was a fantastic night which was a great success in raising the issue of homelessness. We will be looking to do it again next year and hope we get even more people along. Some managed to sleep and were snoring but most of us laughed our way through the night to keep the spirits up."

The event was well covered by local media with TV, radio and newspapers

reporters all dropping in during the night.

Sleep Easy organizer, Susie Knights, said: "I haven't slept a wink and am told it got down to as low as -4 degrees.

"It has given me a real sense of achievement, but remember that I have only slept outside for a single night. We have done

this to draw attention to the fact that there are people in Norfolk doing this every night of the year."

If you want to find out more or make a donation please contact Susie Knights on 07967 741103 or e-mail susieknight@ymca-norfolk.org.uk



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If you would like to find out more, please contact Beccy Sheriteh, YMCA Norfolk, Supported Lodging Support/Development Worker on 07766 112611 alternatively email: beccysheriteh@ymca-norfolk.org.uk

Norwich YMCA Ltd is a Registered Charity No: 801606. Norwich YMCA is working towards implementation of its equal opportunities policy.

NEWS

Norwich & Norfolk Christian news at www.networknorfolk.co.uk

GOOD NEWS

FOR NORWICH & NORFOLK

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 ■ Churches, Christian organisations and individuals within Norwich and Norfolk are invited to send news, events and pictures which relate to the demonstration of the Gospel in social action, community care and evangelism generally.
 This will not only encourage those Christians involved in similar activities but also inform leaders in other churches who are contemplating similar forms of outreach.
 ■ The deadline for material for the special Celebrate Norwich & Norfolk edition is Friday April 16 and for the regular Harvest edition is Friday August 27.

■ While every care has been taken in compiling this publication and the statements contained within are believed to be correct, the publishers cannot accept responsibility for any inaccuracies.
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I am the way, the truth and the life

■ I asked a doctor: What is life? She replied: "I don't know. There are signs doctors use to diagnose death. But there is no medical definition of life."
 I asked a biologist: What is life? He replied: "I don't know. There are certain characteristics that describe it. But there is no biological definition of life."
 I asked the philosophers: What is life? And the answers came thick and fast: "It is knowledge. It is duty. It's whatever you choose. It's nothing. It's absurd. It's a joke."
 I asked the Buddha. He said: "Life is suffering." I asked the Prophet. He said: "Life is a test." I asked the Guru and he showed me a wheel; I asked David Beckham and he gave me a ball.
 The truth is, nobody can really, properly define what life actually is. Not the scientists, nor the philosophers, the wise or the ignorant; in spite of the fact that each one of us enjoys it for a while.
 They describe what it is like, dream of what



Tom Chapman pastor Surrey Chapel



it should be and proclaim what it is or isn't for. But who can say what it actually is?
 When Jesus came, he gave no definitions either. But he touched the lepers, befriended the sinners, calmed the storm and raised the dead. He spoke and lived the real thing. And in his Easter Passion for Life he embraced painful death to buy true life for us, and rose again to bring it to us.
 He showed that to know life is not to understand a theory, concept or a philosophy; it is not to obey a religion, perform a function or live a dream.
 To know life is to know a person.
 I asked Jesus: What is life? And he replied: "I am."

Norfolk author with a message about love

By SANDIE SHIRLEY

It is a year that looks full of promise for Dereham woman, Joanne Robinson. It comes with the launch of her new book and an informative website that builds on her continuing mission to help women as a counsellor, life coach and speaker.
 Having suffered emotional and financial heartbreak after a cycle of destructive relationships spanning more than 15 years, she is now helping other women break free from similar relationships. Joanne is founder of Donna Intera – Italian for whole woman. She is passionate about women finding the ultimate place to receive God's best in their friendships and romantic relationships
 "...He loves Me Not? (Last Word Publications, £7.99) embraces more than four years' work. It features short stories of my relationships and the effect of brokenness and hopelessness. It has helped me understand what real love was about and the lies and excuses I believed and put up with. It includes prayers and reflections and self-analysis through honesty," says Joanne.
 "With it has come Love in Season, a website for Christian women with devotionals, film clips and articles on relationships. It is always the right season for love with God. There is an inner thirst for Christ, as in the woman at the well, since he is the source of all our needs. He can love us to wholeness and build our self-esteem so that we do not isolate ourselves from community where God has placed us."
 She offers bespoke, interactive workshops in the Norfolk community and beyond. They are



Author Joanne Robinson.

ones. She stresses that you do not need bruises to be abused. It can be financial and emotional abuse, isolation and using the children, threats and intimidation.
 Joanne reached rock bottom with no job, finances and a destructive relationship with her live-in partner. Over the years she was drawn to abusive destructive relationships because she was desperate for love and validation after growing up with poor, abusive role models.
 "God's whole presence came into my heart when I decided to go into the unknown with him ten years ago. My life dramatically changed; I trained as a Christian counsellor and went to Canada to train as a life skills coach as I met people who led me in my ministry," says Joanne.
 "Coming out of the wilderness was a slow process but God has this beautiful way of weaving in growth and history in our life's tapestries. For the first time I was able to change the negative patterns in my life. My values and choices became so different. Now they don't lead to destruction but construction. With a developing new mindset I have learnt lessons to put more tools in my box to help other women do life successfully whether they are 18 or 70, single or married," she says.
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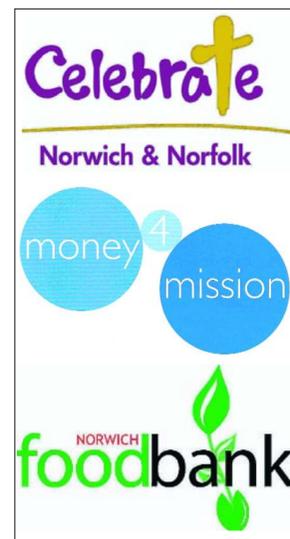
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John Betts is interviewed outside the Forum for a promotional Celebrate DVD.

Trio of initiatives launched in city

Three new Christian community initiatives were officially launched in Norwich on January 20 with the backing of Transforming Norwich.
 Money 4 Mission, Norwich Foodbank and Celebrate Norwich & Norfolk made their first public appearances at St Luke's Church on Aylsham Road in Norwich at an event attended by around 80 people.
 Urging people from the Christian community to get involved in these projects, John Betts, development officer of Transforming Norwich said: "All three projects have the potential to advance the kingdom of God. It's all about releasing Christians to build a fine community in and around Norwich."
 Celebrate Norwich & Norfolk is a major Christian event planned for Norwich in June following on from last year's successful Churches Community Action Fair. It aims to be an expression of all aspects of the life of the local Christian community and will take the form of a series of events planned around mid June in Norwich city centre.
 Celebrate development officer, John Betts, said: "The city centre will be buzzing with a whole raft of activities from serious debates to fun activities. The body of Christ together reaching out to the community without hiring an evangelist but using what we already have." Jill Gower, who is leading the prayer team, said: "This will be a poignant time for our city."
 A special Celebrate Norfolk edition of the Good News for Norwich & Norfolk tabloid Christian newspaper is being published to mark the event and act as its official programme. Look out



for your free copy from early May.
 Norwich Foodbank aims to help some of the 30,000 people in Greater Norwich who are living on the edge of poverty. Part of a national network of foodbanks, the Norwich project aims to give out nutritionally balanced emergency boxes of food to people in crisis who have nowhere else to turn.
 Norwich Foodbank trustee Frank O'Neill said it is an exciting new project which will distribute emergency two-day food parcels, to people in need. It is a Christian based project but available to everybody.
 He encouraged people to get

involved through Harvest festivals, church gifts, donations and collections from churches and businesses. An idea currently being launched is for regular events on Saturdays at supermarkets, where collectors give shoppers the opportunity to buy one extra item in their trolley to be donated to Foodbank.
 Potential supporters can be given a shopping list of needed items including UHT milk, cereals, tinned tomatoes and tea bags. Frank encourages churches and groups to sign up to be involved.
 Money 4 Mission aims to support, encourage and facilitate Christian social action in Norwich and Norfolk. Connected to established charity Dreams & Visions, Money 4 Mission aims to raise and distribute funds specifically for local initiatives and help simplify the process of giving for the work of Christian mission with Norfolk.
 Biddy Collyer, the driving force behind Money 4 Mission, said: "This is the destiny of Norwich and our plans for the city. There are lots of Christian ministries in our city that can pull together. Through these relationships we can bring light to Norwich. Money 4 Mission aims to provide sustainable income for our Christian agencies. It's really important that prayer and evangelism is at the centre of what we do."
CONTACTS:
 Foodbank and Celebrate, contact John Betts at 2john@johnbetts.fsnet.co.uk or on 01603 617905.
 Money 4 Mission, contact Biddy Collyer at biddycollyer@hotmail.com www.norwichfoodbank.co.uk www.celebratenorfolk.co.uk

in brief

Church in a cafe concept set for a Norwich debut

NORWICH: The concept of a church in a café could be coming to Norwich soon with interest already raised and a training event planned for April 24. LESLEY HENERY reports.
 Cafechurch is an exciting new venture springing up across the UK. The idea, led by Rev Cid Latty and the Cafechurch Network, originated in Christchurch Baptist, Welwyn Garden City, two years ago. Currently there are over 50 cafechurches in towns and cities across the UK. Norwich could be next!
 Once a month, cafechurch take over a local coffee shop and host an event for the local community. Costa Coffee are keen to build links with the local community and are encouraging churches to set up a cafechurch in their UK stores, although alternative venues can also be used.
 All are welcome at cafechurch – it's an opportunity for the church to engage with the local community. To invite friends, family, neighbours and work colleagues – anyone wanting to talk about issues that matter to them, but who would not necessarily go to a 'normal' church service.
 Cafechurch gives people an opportunity to meet in a relaxed atmosphere to look at issues, such as the environment, debt, stress and relationships, from a Christian perspective.
 Each event is relaxed and informal with quizzes, interviews, discussion, live music, great coffee and good conversation! What an exciting way of bringing people together, to discover more about God. Often church is seen as being out of touch and boring. Cafechurch seeks to change all that.
 The Cafechurch Network has a responsibility to train and resource churches nationwide. They hold regular training days and once churches have attended a cafechurch training day, the Cafechurch Network will link them to their local store and resource them to begin cafechurch events. The vision of the Cafechurch Network is a big one, "One day we will see a cafechurch on every high street in every town, village and city."
 How exciting is that? We are keen to work with other churches and/or individuals to make cafechurch a reality and would love to hear from you.
 ■ A cafechurch training day has been organised for Saturday April 24 from 9am-4.30pm to include history, vision, worship and workshops. If you are interested in being involved, please contact New Hope Christian Centre, (01603) 617905 or e-mail the church office jenny.nhcc@virgin.net. Check out: www.cafechurch.net

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Are you interested in writing

■ Good News for Norwich & Norfolk has vacancies for occasional writers both for the printed and web versions of the paper. If you have some writing experience, or would like to gain some, and are interested in the local Christian community, please e-mail editor Keith Morris at keith.morris@networknorwich.co.uk to arrange an informal chat.

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Footballer speaks of international experience

■ NORFOLK: Former Northern Ireland international teenage footballer Josh Walsh helped launch a series of 11-a-side games between Norfolk Christian Football league Under-18 teams at the UEA Sportspark on February 20.

Josh told players about his own international football experiences playing with the likes of Manchester United's Johnny Evans and against Arsenal's Cesc Fabregas.

He also spoke to Network Norfolk about his coaching work with Norwich City's Football in the Community programme and his new Christian sports project Ninety Plus Ministries.

Visit www.networknorfolk.co.uk to hear the audio interview www.ninetyplusministries.com



Former international footballer Josh Walsh.

Education is key for group future

By KEVIN GOTTS

It's all change at the Christian Magdalene Group project in Norwich which works with people caught up in the vice trade.

Project manager Canon Mair Talbot is moving on to become chaplain at the Colman Hospital and chairman, Rt Rev Peter Fox, has signalled a change in direction and ways of working.

Peter, a former Bishop of Papua New Guinea, has just completed his first year as chair of the charity and acknowledges that the sex trade has changed a great deal since the Magdalene Group was formed in 1992.

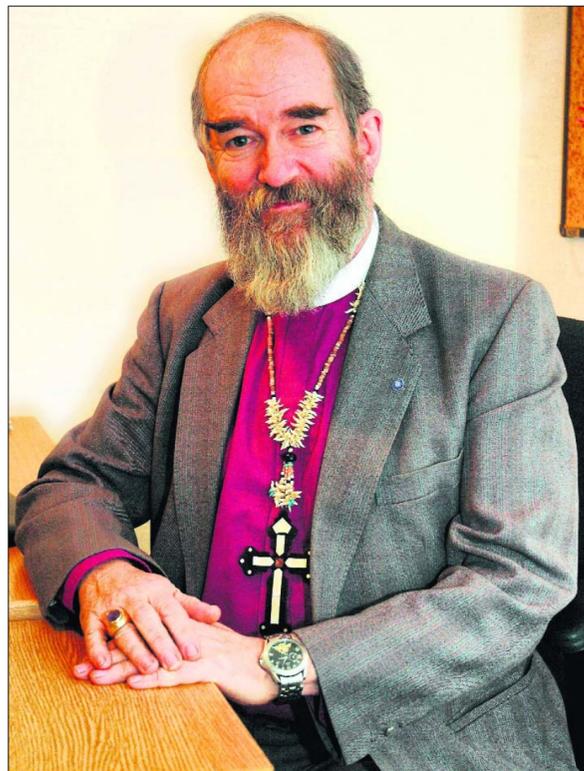
Peter, who is also vicar of Old Lakenham and Tuckswood, said: "Mobile telephones and internet communication have changed the way prostitutes work considerably and the Magdalene Group needs to adjust its way of working if it is to meet the challenge."

Education is the way forward he believes: "We will be doing far more in the way of education. More than ever the emphasis must be on equipping the vulnerable to resist exploitation and that begins with the way we educate the young; it continues in the way we offer viable alternatives to people who feel they have none. Lack of choice, lack of control, these are the hallmarks of true poverty."

He is concerned about the effect of an increasingly secular society on children: "People are being conditioned to think that sex does not matter, that children do not need a stable family background and that our only value comes from our spending power."

"The Magdalene Group is about promoting an opposite point of view that sex is too important to cheapen, that children thrive best where they have a strong and loving family background that we have value because we are God's children and we do not need money to have worth."

Volunteers play an active part in the Group's work, explains Peter: "We have to educate ourselves to be effective. To better understand people's situation properly. I think the training needed by our volunteers in the future



Magdalene Group chairman, Rt Rev Peter Fox.

will be more demanding than ever. We may have to settle for fewer volunteers from whom we ask a great deal more. It will not be a task that suits everybody. It will need very special people."

Other Christians can lend support, says Peter: "It can begin by learning more about what we do and telling others about it. I hope we will do a lot more to promote our work, by visiting church groups, schools, service organisations and telling people who we are, what we do and who we serve. Christian groups can give us an opportunity to set out our shop-window."

Peter voices his concern about a

growing problem: "We need to do something about trafficking of young people from country to country for prostitution, which is a really serious and growing problem. Imagine how vulnerable a person is when lured far from home and without money. This is the fate of many young people, who are lured into this country from overseas to find themselves enslaved to prostitution."

The charity is currently advertising for a full-time female project manager on www.networknorwich.co.uk

More details about Group can be found at www.magdalengroup.org

NEWS

Norwich & Norfolk Christian online shop at www.norwichchristian.co.uk

Archbishop set for poetic visit to Norwich

■ NORFOLK: The Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Revd Dr Rowan Williams, is to visit Norfolk to speak at the largest church in the Diocese - Norwich Cathedral - and at one of the smallest churches - All Saints', Sharrington.

On Saturday May 1, the Archbishop, will join prize-winning British poet, broadcaster and great-great-granddaughter of Charles Darwin, Ruth Padel, in conversation on the relationship between poetry and prayer. They will read a

selection of their own poetry, and discuss the need for both in our world today.

Following coffee, the Archbishop will answer questions from the audience. Big screens will ensure good views from around the Cathedral.

This Norwich Cathedral Institute event will take place in the Cathedral from 10am-12.30pm. The event is open to all, but admission is by ticket only. Tickets £5 (£3 concessions) are available on 01603 508050.

On the evening of Friday April 30, the Archbishop will reflect on the life of the rural church at All Saints', Sharrington. The invitation to speak came from Anne Sloman, a member of All Saints' and former Political Editor of the BBC, who has served for the past five years on the Archbishops' Council and now chairs the Church of England's Church Buildings Council which supports dioceses and parishes in their care of more than 16,000 church buildings.

news in brief

Trustee duo boost for Street Pastors

■ NORFOLK Street Pastors has received a boost with the appointment of two new trustees and news that members from 35 different churches are actively engaged in the project.

The two new trustees are Methodist local preacher and Police and Fire Service chaplain, Richard Whall and serving Police Sergeant and leader of the Norfolk branch of Christian Police Association, Rachel Thrussell.

Richard is a chartered accountant and, until recently, a Board member of YMCA Norfolk where he is still on the Community Impact Programmes Committee. Since 2003 he has been a chaplain to Norfolk Police and also more recently, to Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service.

"I have had a heart for the work of Street Pastors since I was invited to the first meeting in Norwich when Les Isaacs shared his vision," said Richard, "although being asked to be a trustee is my first real involvement. This and my other activities affirm my belief that the time has long gone when we, as church, can sit back and wait for the world to come to us on a Sunday morning."

Rachel is a Police Sergeant based at Bethel Street police station and some of her duties include working the night-time economy in the city centre on Friday and Saturday nights. Rachel has also recently re-established a branch of the Christian Police Association in Norfolk, which she leads. Rachel is also joining the Street Pastors Intercessors team.

"I am always pleased to see the presence of Street Pastors in the city when I am on duty and they can be a valuable source of extra help in a practical sense as well as the spiritual presence they bring to the streets. I have contacted Street Pastors when on duty to attend to a distressed female who had rowed with her partner.

"This is a valuable way for the churches to practically assist in the difficult job the police have during the busy party nights. Long may it grow and continue."

Project co-ordinator, Paul Rendell, recently counted up the number of churches represented in the work of Norfolk Street Pastors including Street Pastors, Prayer Pastors and trustees and the total was an impressive 35 from right across the whole denominational spectrum in Norfolk.



£100k transformation of conference centre

Belsey Bridge Conference Centre is providing new audio-visual, internet and accommodation facilities in a £100k transformation.

The Christian conference centre, 12 miles south of Norwich, at Ditchingham, was launched by the well-known Christian Conference Trust (CCT) at the end of 2009. CCT already operates two other successful Christian conference centres - The Hayes in Swanwick, Derbyshire and High Leigh in Hertfordshire. The addition of Belsey Bridge provides a Centre within East Anglia offering quality residential and day conference facilities for up to 110 delegates.

During the last few months the Centre has undergone a massive £100k transformation with conferences already benefiting from new audio-visual equipment in three conference halls and complimentary wireless internet available across the entire site. The three conference halls have been completed refurbished and are already proving very popular with groups. Plans for the next 12 months include an upgrade of the existing en-suite accommodation.

Grant Farrant, Business Development Manager for CCT, said: "These improvements ensure that the Centre is able to provide high quality conference facilities at an affordable price for the benefit of the Christian community across East Anglia."

"The staff team are committed to providing a Centre to which guests want to return again and again. The Centre has many strengths including excellent catering and an inspiring location. The team are committed to building on these strengths further which will be of major benefit to the Norfolk and Suffolk area."

Visit www.cct.org.uk/belseybridge to find out more about what the Centre has to offer, ring 01986 892133 or email belseybridge@cct.org.uk to book a time to visit.



An impressive setting and refurbished facilities at Belsey Bridge.

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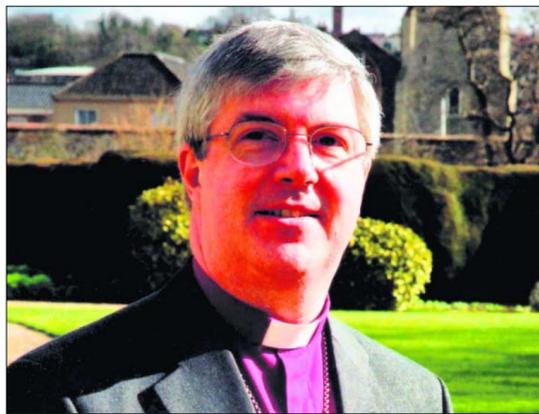
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Bishop's decade of hope

As the **Bishop of Norwich, the Right Rev Graham James**, celebrates ten years in the Diocese, he gave his views on the past ten years for the church in Norfolk, the challenges and successes and also his hopes and prayers for the next ten. **Keith Morris** asked the questions.



Q Has your role developed as you thought it might over last ten years?

A I believe that I am not just here for the church of England and to manage a religious organisation. I am here for the wider community as well, which is why I was instrumental in starting the Norfolk Community Foundation for example. It is why I am prepared to take risks and be a

Q What is the best thing about being Bishop of Norwich?

A It's the people to whom one ministers, the welcome you get all over the Diocese. It's sharing those moments when people are making very significant changes in their faith journey. It never ceases to inspire me. I have probably ordained over 120 new priests in the ten years

In Norfolk many of our communities still cherish the church in their midst. The boundaries between the church and the wider community are quite blurred here which is what I love about it. The church is deeply embedded in its life. I am privileged to be in a part of the country where despite the voices of secularism, God's voice is still heard and honoured.

sponsor of the Open Academy. It is why I am willing to work across the boundaries of the churches in partnership.

I suppose your role also changes as people get to know you and trust you. In the Diocese, of the 300 active clergy at least 200 of them have been ordained by me or have come into the Diocese in my time here.

Q What is the biggest change in the structure and shape of the church over the past ten years?

A My sense of our churches is that there is a recognition always of the fragility that comes with – if you don't convert the next generation there will not be a living church on earth.

There is an increasing passion for youth work. The number of youth workers is now around 20 to 30 employed in the parishes compared to just two or three, ten years ago. There is a commitment to growth in discipleship, service and numbers.

Q How do you react to the apparent decline in church attendances?

A I am not sure that the church has declined in size. The decline in even Sunday congregations is modest. What has changed is the pattern of people's attendance at services which has changed enormously.

Not as many people are there every week, but more people come at certain festival such as Christmas and they will come when they are responding to a need, such as services for people who are bereaved.

The strength of the church does not simply lie in Sunday congregations. Just remember that there are far more communicants in just the Church of England on a wet Sunday in February than there

are members of the three main political parties in total.

Q What most excites you about the church in Norfolk today?

A It is the fact that our tradition has been around for hundreds of years, yet most of our parishes are prepared to rethink their mission for the present day. Fresh Expressions of church and renewed ways of our congregations reaching out to their communities suggest that now is a rather exciting time to be in the Church of England, despite what you might read in the national press. Because people are rethinking how their Christian commitment is going to be lived both in their churches and in their daily lives.

Q What is the biggest challenge facing the church?

A One of the challenges which has not been met very well is that of militant and vigorous atheism which has been renewed through the writings of Richard Dawkins and others. It is an incredibly unsophisticated attack on religion in general. It brands all faith as irrational, fanatical, narrow and bigoted.

The cathedral behind us is not the product of a bigoted mind but one of an expansive faith, one which cherishes beauty and subtlety and a vigorous intellectual life.

We must not let Christianity simply become a sentimental and emotional religion – it has got to have intellectual content.

How do you speak of God intelligently to those who have dismissed God as not even worth thinking about?

They will of course discover that they have needs which are deeply spiritual at some stage but they

won't then have the resources to deal with them.

Q Do you think we will see a woman bishop in the Church of England in the next ten years?

A No. But my suspicion is that in ten to 20 years time we will, partly because the legislation will take that long to get into place. I want to see women bishops, but what I don't want to see are people in different traditions within our church being unchurched. It is how we can live in the same church with two quite different opinions on this.

Q How do you view calls for greater unity between different parts of the Christian church?

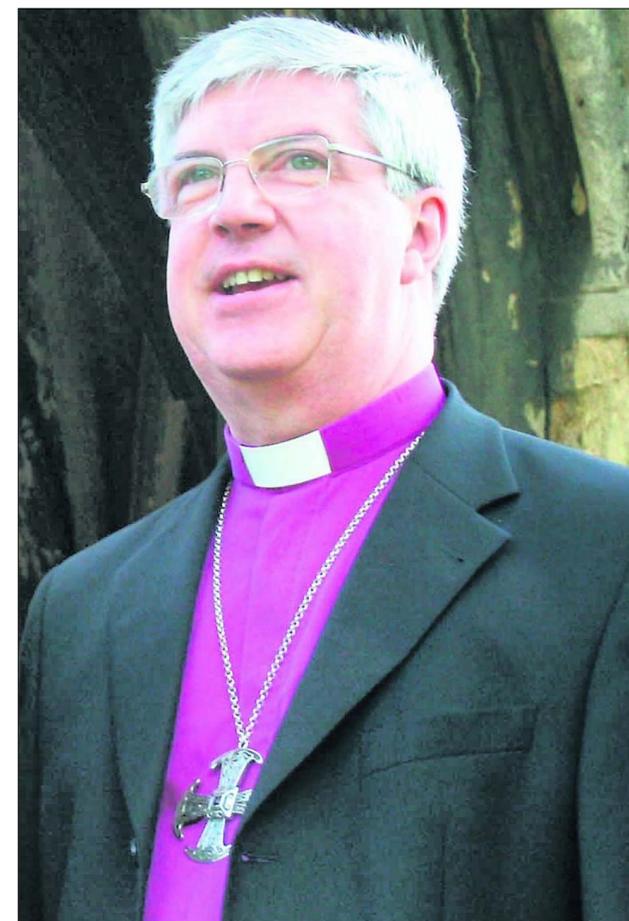
A I think we have all sorts of good examples of co-operation between different churches and church leaders in this Diocese. I think, however, that the impetus for union schemes between different churches is gone.

But what I do sense is that, in terms of service to the community and trust and respect of one another, the communion between different churches is greater than it has ever been.

Q What do you think the church will look like in another ten years time?

A From the outside I am not sure it will look hugely different. What I pray is that it will be a body which is more vigorous, more loving, more mission-centred and which has grown in depth of discipleship, faithfulness to Christ, in service to the wider community and in numbers. The sort of growth which can begin to transform society.

■ The full transcript of the interview can be found on www.networknorfolk.co.uk



Rt Rev Graham James, Bishop of Norwich.

news in brief

International youth choir visits Norfolk

■ **CROMER/NORWICH:** Over 200 young voices from Eurochor will perform at churches in Cromer and Norwich for a special Easter visit as part of the Passion for Life programme. The choir's exciting arrangements and different languages make for a unique outreach event.

Eurochor is a large youth choir and orchestra of 16-20 year old Christians from various European countries. They perform many concerts each year in different countries including Switzerland, Holland, Germany, France and the UK singing Christian hymns and songs in various languages.

Their primary intention is to share their faith and reach out to others.

Many people have very happy memories of their last visit to Norfolk in November 2008. One comment overheard, which summed up many opinions, "If I had only known it was this good I would have brought my friends and relations".

This is an opportunity to bring your friends and neighbours to a relaxed concert performed to a professional standard. Admission is free of charge.

Norwich Central Baptist Church, Duke Street, Norwich NR3 3AP on Saturday April 3, at 7.30pm.

Cromer Parish Church, Church Street, Cromer, NR27 9AE on Sunday April 4 at 6.30pm

Innovative farm project

■ **DISS:** An innovative South Norfolk Christian project has been reaching out to young people facing difficult social issues with the help of chicks, goats, ducklings and a Dexter cow.

Kadesh Community Farm is a project run from Diss Community Church and has received funding from Christian community trust Dreams and Visions.

The project started in February 2009 when the farmland was acquired in Palgrave near Diss. A group of 35 young people from local churches and from Robinswood Church, in Gloucester, along with members of the local community all pitched in to begin clearing the site.

It now welcomes local youth groups, job seekers and others: <http://kadeshcommunityfarm.blogspot.com/>

New church is planted

■ **THETFORD:** A new church has been planted and is starting to grow in a Norfolk town with the help of Facebook, some puppets and young people engaged in social action.

Nigel and Glenna Worth, from Braintree are joining together with Dan and Annette Morgan to establish a New Frontiers congregation in Thetford.

On March 27 they are holding a barn dance in Thetford Guildhall and a Family Fun Day will follow in the summer. Regular Sunday meetings are planned from October. www.thetfordchurchplant.com

Bringing back the prodigals

By PETER BARNES

■ **NORWICH:** International Christian communicator, Jeff Lucas, was in Norwich earlier this month as part of a week-long UK tour with the West Midlands based Saltmine Theatre Company.

Billed as a time of chat, interviews, comedy, music and drama, a packed audience at Norwich Central Baptist Church were treated to an emotional and thought-provoking evening containing all those ingredients.

Renowned for his clear teaching and preaching, Jeff focused on the chaotic situations and emotions which families of 'prodigals' face. Using humour and pathos he discussed the struggles and hopes raised in his best selling book Will Your Prodigal Come Home?

"If you have had your heart broken by a prodigal, you know the pain of being hurt or disappointed by a loved one and the utter despair of seeing them turn away from Christ and the Cross, is there a way to guide the prodigal home?"

Lucas acknowledged that every prodigal is different. "Some have defied God; some have turned to drink, drugs and crime;



Jeff Lucas, right, is interviewed by Michael Taylor in Norwich.

others are still in church pews with hearts closed to Jesus."

Clearly there are no easy answers, he continued, but through understanding, insight into the emotions that form within families and an acknowledgement of the power of prayer, Jeff delivered a message that was both challenging and comforting.

The Bible story of The Prodigal Son was illustrated with an excellent drama sketch by the Saltmine Theatre Company who

also delivered a feast of wit and humour in their dialogues and interviews.

As well as being a radio broadcaster, the author of 14 books and a number of study guides and pamphlets, Jeff is also part of the Spring Harvest Leadership team. He is an ambassador for Compassion, a charity working to help children in poverty. He and wife Kay live in Colorado, USA where he holds teaches and preaches in the 10,000-strong Timberline Church at Fort Collins.

Miracle turnaround for Norfolk mission girl Ruth

By SANDIE SHIRLEY

■ **WYMONDHAM** Christian couple, Sylvia and David Barker nursed their daughter through the tears, heartache and isolation of ME to see a miracle turnaround a decade later as she became an overseas mission worker.

Ruth was a schoolgirl of 13 when she contracted glandular fever, but within a few short weeks she was diagnosed with ME. It disrupted her education and her social life.

"Sometimes Ruth could only do a few hours of school and I had to be on call to bring her home," says Sylvia, who carried her and sustained her throughout the illness.

"She managed four GCSEs and with support from the headmaster and staff at Wymondham High School, she took three A levels and later gained a degree in Travel and Tourism Management," she says.

During those dark days, Ruth fought for faith and health through the disease that attacks

the immune system and brings terrible fatigue. Now she is healed and restored.

January 2010 marked the first year anniversary of her work for Scripture Union, Soul Survivor and her Heartland Church in Durban, South Africa. Armed with the winning power of faith and determination she continues her outreach among the street children in the poor townships and is PA to her church pastor.

For the former teenager, who had almost given up on life and questioned her future, it is a miracle turnaround, explains father David.

Furthermore, it comes in the wake of financial challenge and the trauma of a break-in when armed men took her money, credit cards and belongings before Christmas.

It could have caused a health set-back, since stress is often a trigger to the ME, explained David, but his daughter

continues undaunted.

In a letter to her parents' Wymondham Hope Community Church, in response to their financial support after the robbery, she writes:

"God was with us that night and protected us from harm. Without him to protect us and without our faith to pray during the whole thing, I don't think it would have been such a miraculous and happy story. I truly love this place despite its faults and dramas.

"Until you visit you cannot imagine how special the people are and how much work needs to be done for them to find God in the midst of their heartache and troubles.

"I still feel completely safe living here and I don't feel fearful at all. Obviously it has been a reality check but it has also been an amazing time of trusting God in a very bad situation and seeing many positive things come from it."

For more information: www.ruthindurban.spaces.live.com



Ruth Barker in South Africa.

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A passion for Jesus



By TOM CHAPMAN

What could a retired general, a Chinese accountancy student, an international cricketer, the boss of an advertising agency, a university professor and a full-time housewife all have in common?

The answer is a Passion for Life. They – and many others – have been giving their testimonies about the impact Jesus Christ has made upon them.

Five Norwich churches, Anglican, Baptist and Free, representing some 800 people, have been working together this March in a joint mission to make Christ's passion for life known.

Some events – like international cricketer Henry Olunga and ex British Army chief General Sir Richard Dannatt – have been well known, highly credible figures who have spoken to hundreds of people in large venues. Other highlights have included:

- a praise party packed with children and families worshipping Jesus
- a beach trip with folk music, food and 200 students gathered round a bonfire
- an international service with some 50 guests witnessing their four friends being baptised
- an evening of top-quality musical entertainment and a gospel message at the



A beach barbecue, above, and General Sir Richard Dannatt, right.

Ramada Jarvis Hotel
■ a sports quiz and presentation with Christians in Sport

But the vast majority of the scores of events had not involved large venues or professional speakers. They have been organised by smaller groups within churches – seniors clubs, housegroups, toddler groups

and activity groups, in church halls, pub restaurants and homes.

And the message has come from ordinary Christians, sharing their particular passion with perhaps just a handful of people in a living room. By the end of this month we estimate that some 800 people – one for every member of our churches – will have heard

about Jesus in a context in which they are comfortable. How many will actually believe it, we don't know, of course – that's up to him. But we are already hearing reports of people coming to faith this month.

Why did we choose this strategy? Well there is nothing wrong with big evangelistic meetings – we have two coming up. In other parts of the country Passion for Life has taken that route.

But in Norwich our vision has been to empower the people of God to share their passion for themselves, in contexts they and their friends are comfortable, with a natural continuity between the special event and everyday church life. It's not a centralised push, but something every member of our churches owns for themselves – and carries on afterwards.

Remaining events

■ **Friday 26 March, 7.30 pm: A Passion for Youth with NYFC** – an ideal event for 11-19s with a challenging message from YFC leader Gavin Calver. Bring your youth group!

■ **Saturday 27 March, 7.30 pm: A Passion for Life: Find Yours** – for adults with music, testimonies and a message from Norwich evangelist Toby Skipper. Ring 01603 619555 or e-mail: info@apassionforlifenorwich.org.uk. www.apassionforlifenorwich.org.uk

Faith is inspiration

By SANDIE SHIRLEY

The new president of Norwich's Aglow International is set to empower women to meet their God-given calls in life.

Sharon Plummer has taken the helm at the women's ministry and is helping to bring re-generation. It comes with a host of future ground-breaking initiatives in a bid to embrace women of all cultures and ages.

The Thetford-based YMCA worker and Norwich Street Pastor, officially took up office in January after three months in an interim role. The single mother of two has been at the sharp end of the community for the last three years ministering to hurting, lonely youngsters on the pavements of Norwich but she also has a big heart for women. Together with her two team members, Sharon helps host a monthly event with inspiring speakers to build faith and relationships.

Aglow International supports and encourages all women to faith. The organisation was birthed in the 1960s with a handful of praying women from Seattle, America. Today thousands of women are catching their vision across

upmeun countries and every continent. Sharon is building on that heritage. The meetings are tailored for today's women whether they are seventy something grandmothers, business women or those struggling with life's issues.

"Each month we have some women coming who are struggling with addictions and other life



Sharon Plummer, new president of Norwich Aglow International.

issues. They include some women from a Christian rehabilitation centre. God has been bringing them in and one day I believe they will become future speakers in the Aglow chapters, sharing messages of life-changing testimonies."

The new Aglow programme will include informal coffee mornings at the city's Starbucks to hear life-changing talks. A series of

workshops for some of its members to showcase their resources as a life coach, counsellor and drama healing ministry for example are in the pipeline. There also are plans to launch Generation Aglow for 18-30s as an offshoot of the current organisation.

"I want women of all ages to be empowered for God, to be built-up and feel loved and cared for so

they have the courage and encouragement to revisit the dreams and desires that God has laid on their hearts," says Sharon, who was lost and heartbroken after a divorce seven years ago.

"I felt as if life was passing me by; the faith I had as I was growing up seemed almost a distant memory. I found it hard to cry out to God since I felt I did not deserve to be listened to, I became unreachable and did not love myself so felt no-one else could."

Six years ago Sharon was drinking to numb the pain but felt even emptier until a trip to Australia turned her life around. During a meeting five years ago the pastor spoke about not letting the past affect the future and Sharon was reduced to tears.

"I heard Jesus say: 'let me carry all your cares and take care of you.' For the first time in years, I felt relief, peace and an overwhelming feeling of being loved. That night Jesus wiped the slate clear, he gave me hope. Since then I have been amazed at the doors God has opened for me."

The regular Aglow evenings will include a variety of inspirational speakers for 2010 including husband and wife musicians who met on the streets and married, missionary Pat Atkinson and Doreen Davies who has worked amongst the London outcasts and helped pioneer a mission in the Balkans.

Monthly meetings, with an optional meal, are held at 7pm on the fourth Tuesday at the Norwich Holiday Inn, Ipswich Road.

For more details telephone: 01953 454606 or e-mail: roseofsharon2911@yahoo.co.uk

news in brief

Lighthouses of prayer

■ **NORFOLK** Call to Prayer is relaunching its Lighthouses of Prayer initiative and monthly newsletter to encourage local Christians to pray for local ministries, churches and events.

Director Jill Gower said: "During the Just Ten Mission with J. John in 2002, God raised up 113 Lighthouses of Prayer; these very diverse groups gave significant prayer cover to this event and we believe that the time has come to re-launch them."

"There are so many initiatives coming up, including Celebrate, which has the potential to be a major evangelistic event, the recently launched Foodbank and The Father's Heart Conference in Ashill in May. We feel the time has come to see the Lighthouses of Prayer re-established as we have much to pray about. Also to pray for our wonderful ministries in the area which are doing such great work."

"With this in mind we are looking for Lighthouses of Prayer to gather and they can be, as before, very diverse in nature. Some will be within churches, others people gathering across the churches in their region and some may be existing prayer groups."

Once a month, Lighthouses are invited to join together for a combined prayer meeting at the Octagon, All Saints Church, The Street, Poringland from 7pm.

For more information contact Jill on jill@call2prayer.co.uk or 01508 491770.

Church appoints family worker

■ **NORWICH:** A city church has appointed a new family worker to help serve its local community and the move has received a positive response from local schools, Police and other public organisations.

Approximately a year ago, Meadow Way Chapel in Hellesdon felt it was appropriate to respond to the needs in their locality by appointing a Family Worker to serve the community.

Shelley Logan, a trained nursery nurse and schools worker, has now been appointed and, along with her husband Paul, moved into the area at the start of January to take up the role.

She is using her first couple of months in the role speaking to schools, local police, public bodies and organisations already working in the area, seeking the best ways to support families.

Contact: shelleylogan@live.co.uk

Norwich Christian Resource Centre
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An evening with Professor Brian Thorne Friday 9 April 7pm

The Christian author from Norwich will speak on the topic of self worth and the vital difference between selfishness and self love.

The talk is from 7 - 8pm followed by two course meal with tea/coffee at the Norwich Christian Resource Centre, St Michael-at-Plea church, Redwell street, Norwich, NR2 4SN. Tickets £15 or £3 for talk only.

To book call 01603 766978 or email norwichcrc@btconnect.com

Brian Thorne's Books will be on sale:

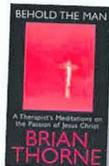


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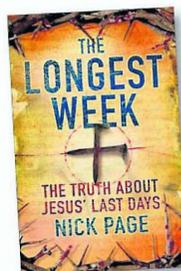
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The Longest Week: The truth about Jesus' Last Days
by Nick Page

RRP £11.99 online price: £10.19

The Power of the Cross CD

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Tim Hughes, Lou Fellingham, Matt Redman & Delirious

RRP £14.99 online price: £12.99



Dozens of North Norfolk churches to join in mission

■ **NORTH NORFOLK:** Dozens of churches in Aylsham, N Walsham and the Bure Valley in North Norfolk will be joining together to engage in a week of mission and outreach events from June 6-13 called God4U.

Churches Together in both Aylsham and in North Walsham have got right behind the mission which is being spearheaded by Robin Wilding, minister of the Emmanuel Baptist Church in Aylsham.

Robin said: "The week should involve activities for youth and adults, to stir thought and interest, but also to give opportunities in both small and large venues for people to hear

the gospel.

"For me the great joy of this event is seeing so many different church denominations getting involved together. People cannot say we will ignore the church because its divided – we demonstrate through this that we may be different in style but we are united in our love for God and desire to make him known."

Groups from local churches will be working alongside Through Faith Missions, who will bring teams of trained volunteer evangelists with them. Through Faith Missions is the organisation behind Walk of a 1000 men, headed up by Daniel Cozens.

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Rent hike threat to drop-in centre

■ The Christian drop-in All Saints' Centre, in Norwich, is facing an uncertain future after a dramatic rent increase from its landlords and is appealing for support for its vital work. Trustee Rev Barry Furness reports.

■ The All Saints Centre greets 2010 with an uncertain future but with faith in its heart.

Having celebrated its 30th anniversary last year, and become an important and respected part of Norwich life over that 30 years, serving the people of, and visitors to, Norwich in so many ways, a dramatic rent increase from landlords The Norwich Historic Churches Trust has come as rather a blow.

With its current lease expiring in March, the Trustees have been considering its future and in spite of financial difficulties agree that it must continue, particularly as it is a Christian Centre and we know that with God all things are possible.

All Saints' Centre is a beacon of God's love in the centre of Norwich, and a place where Christians of all



All Saints volunteer chef Paul behind the servery.

denominations, or none, can serve the community in the name of Christ. It cannot therefore hide its light under a bushel by moving to back-street premises; nor can it close its doors, as it is a much needed and used city centre facility. So to the future!

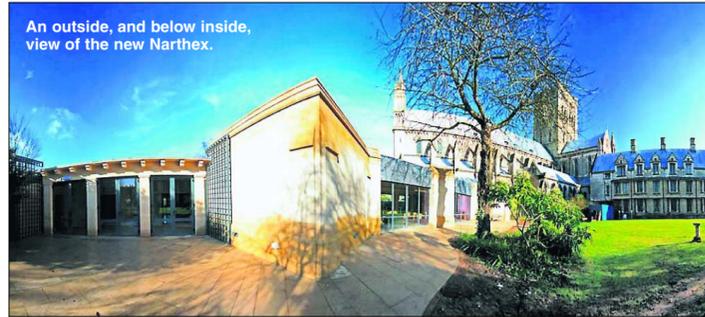
The Trustees continue to look for grants, openings for publicity and support from the community and are moving on in faith. There are plans for a service of re-dedication, with patron Bishop Graham James, on Saturday April 15, when we shall be putting the next five years' lease in God's hands

and committing ourselves to the future.

Meanwhile we hope that, if you haven't already been in, you will do so. We serve delicious, low-cost, home-cooked lunches and provide a warm, comfortable and welcoming venue in the city.

We are also looking for more volunteers to play a role in the future of the centre. For more details please do visit our website or come in and see us; we are situated in All Saints Church, opposite John Lewis and are open every day!

■ www.allsaintsnorwich.org.uk



An outside, and below inside, view of the new Narthex.

New era as £2.8m project is completed

The centenary of Norwich's Roman Catholic Cathedral is being celebrated with a year-long programme of activities and the opening of the new Narthex £2.85m community facilities centre.

The Narthex project officially opened on March 16 and is an extension to the Grade I listed building that will provide community and learning facilities that include a main hall, a café, shop, exhibition space and educational facilities.

The Narthex is hoped to attract a new wave of interest in St John's Roman Catholic Cathedral from the city and beyond.

The centenary celebrations formally got under way on Sunday January 3 with an inauguration service by Bishop Michael Evans, leader of the Catholic community in East Anglia.

The cathedral's official 100th birthday will be on December 8, but the centenary celebrations will reach their peak with a Day of Celebration and Thanksgiving on June 24, the feast day for St John the Baptist.

Events over the year include a flower festival, a series of concerts and a range of social events.

Father James Walsh, the Dean of St John's, said: "I want this year to be truly memorable for the people of Norwich and throughout East Anglia as we embark on these celebrations.

"St John's is one

By KEITH MORRIS

of the iconic buildings in the city with a unique character, it is also the spiritual home to a large and thriving congregation with a wonderful mix of cultures and nationalities.

"Throughout 2010 we will be offering a warm welcome to visitors, especially to the people of Norwich who have not yet come through the doors. It will be a time for us to remember our past with gratitude, to celebrate our present with enjoyment and to look forward to our future with hope."

St John's is the second largest Catholic cathedral in the UK. After nearly a century as the parish church of the Catholic community in Norwich it became the mother church of the new diocese of East Anglia in 1976.

Norwich is one of the few English cities to have two cathedrals and, over the last 30 years, they have grown closer in a spiritual and practical partnership.

The Narthex will provide a

new focus for visitors to the cathedral. It will offer a place to look and learn, to visit and find out about the history of the cathedral. The project will improve physical and intellectual access to the cathedral, providing a wonderful welcome for all who visit and worship here. It will enable the cathedral to play a fuller part in the life of the region.

The Narthex will add some 400 square metres to the Cathedral complex, providing much-needed social, educational and interpretative space and a new, level access into the Cathedral.

As part of the project the existing community facilities will be extended and refurbished. Over 85% of the total cost of £2.85 million has already been raised. The Narthex will enable the Cathedral team to develop and respond to four vital aspects of the life of the Cathedral: Building cohesive communities, Youth and Education, Adding to the cultural life of Norwich and East Anglia and Protecting and preserving our heritage.



Prom praise sounds fill Norwich hall

■ A hugely popular orchestra from London consumed every 'inch of space' in St Andrew's Hall on March 13 with a heart-beating, foot-tapping mixture of secular and sacred music.

Under the direction and baton of Noel Tredinnick, the All Souls Orchestra thrilled a packed auditorium with pieces by Eric Coates, Rossini, Bizet, Boeliman and Haydn Wood among others.

It was almost impossible to pick a favourite item from a wide and varied selection but the beautiful voice of Sarah Vander Ploeg, an American lyric soprano singing Eagles Wings and Oh who am I?, just nudged top spot from saxophonist Sarah Lawson playing Glazounov's Concerto and organist Richard Lennox' rendering of Toccata from Suite Gothique.

An attractive feature characterising this concert was the involvement of local singers. The combined choir of over 100 voices drawn from 20 different churches in the Greater Norwich area tackled with distinction choral music, which included classics by Mozart and Haydn and modern writers Stuart Townend, Graham Kendrick and Roger Jones.

The All Souls Orchestra is part of the Langham Arts Trust and the proceeds from the concert are in support of the Prom Praise for Schools Project.



The programme was compered by Hugh Palmer, currently Rector of All Souls Church, but formerly a Curate serving under Canon

Gordon Bridger at Holy Trinity Church in Norwich. Review by Peter Barnes

Global day of prayer

Norwich and Norfolk will once again be part of the world's largest prayer meeting on Pentecost Sunday, May 23, which marks the 10th anniversary of the Global Day of Prayer (GDOP).

Organisers hope that all the nations of the World will be participating in this incredible event and millions will gather worldwide to be part of a vast 24-hour wave of prayer starting as dawn breaks in New Zealand, flowing through Australasia, Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas and finishing in Samoa!

Norfolk and Norwich will be taking part for the fourth consecutive year and organisers are hoping that the Cathedral, which holds at least 1000 people, will be full this year with young and old uniting in prayer and praise.

Norwich administrator, Hilary Oliver, said: "There will be opportunities to pray for local and national issues, together in small groups or to pray individually, whatever you are comfortable in doing. All ages are welcome and we actively invite you to bring your children to be part of this event, there will be a separate programme for them but they will also participate in the main event.

"Now, perhaps more than at any time in our recent history, as we see so many of our Christian values being eroded and our liberty to share and preach the gospel being threatened, we need to gather together and ask God to move on our behalf to change the direction this nation is heading in," said Hilary.

"During World War II it is believed that daily gatherings of people in this nation in prayer changed the direction and outcome of the War. Let us take this opportunity to make a difference now and be part of a concerted, united prayer event for our nation."

Every nation at every GDOP event prays the same prayer although the events are vastly different as they each have a flavour of the local community and gather in different



A scene from last year's GDOP event in Norwich Cathedral.

venues. Some events are held in football stadium, some in churches, some in the open air, some in homes, some in cathedrals.

"Imagine the unity amongst the body of Christ as we cry out together, using the same words, to our Father in Heaven to heal our land and our world," said Hilary. "Last year 220 nations participated and it is anticipated that there will be more events held among the nations involving more people as the word spreads and people respond to the resounding call to 'pray globally, gather locally'.

"God TV covers the event and no doubt some have watched and seen some of the large meetings across the world. So come and be

part of the largest prayer meeting in the world by coming to Norwich Cathedral at 6.30 pm on Sunday May 23, and join your prayers with millions of others making a change in the spiritual climate of our nation and our world."

Car parking will be no problem as, in addition to parking available in the Cathedral grounds, visitors are able to use the Cathedral's overflow car park on Browne's Meadow which has direct access into the Cathedral precincts.

For further information and to obtain leaflets about the event please contact administrator Hilary Oliver: phone 01603 620444 or email: hilary.oliver@nflc.org.uk or www.globaldayofprayer.com/videos.html

YMCA's £4.2m Norwich flats plan gets the green light

■ NORWICH: YMCA Norfolk's plan to build 40 self-contained flats for young homeless people in Norwich city centre has been given the green light to go ahead with the approval of planning permission from Norwich City Council on February 4.

Last July, the YMCA Norfolk Board gave the go-ahead to explore the £4.2m plan to redevelop the rear part of the current YMCA accommodation on St Giles Street in Norwich and build 40 self-contained flats for young homeless people in its place. In October the project was granted £2.25m from the Homes and Communities Agency.

The development will see part of the current buildings on the Bethel Street side demolished, leaving the frontage on St Giles intact. The new facility would provide move-on accommodation to help prepare young people for independent living.

Each self-contained flat will have a living room/bedroom, a kitchen and a bathroom.

There will be shared communal facilities such as a lounge, and somewhere to provide training in life skills such as cooking and IT. The YMCA will also provide support staff who can give advice and guidance to encourage young people into work and training.

YMCA Norfolk CEO, Tim Sweeting, said: "I am delighted that we have been granted planning permission, as it will enable us to

provide much-needed supported accommodation for both young men and women who are looking to become self-supporting and will be the last step on their journey before moving on to independent living."

"We are seeing an increase in the numbers requiring our services and we are committed to doing everything we can to help young people when they need it most. This housing will provide young people with crucial move-on accommodation from our Central YMCA facility and allow us to help a much great number of young people."

"Young people will be given a place first at the Central YMCA where they can be assessed. Those who show they are committed to developing themselves and moving forward will be offered the opportunity to live in one of the flats on Bethel Street, for a maximum of two years," said Tim.

Some 40 bedrooms and offices in the older front part of the existing St Giles YMCA hostel will remain in use throughout the building phase to cater for existing residents.

There is a target completion date of the end of 2011.

If you want to find out more or make a donation please contact Susie Knights on 07967 741103 or e-mail susieknight@ymca-norfolk.org.uk or visit www.ymca-norfolk.org.uk

events in brief

Gospel choir date at Norwich Cathedral

■ NORWICH: Heavenly sounds from the Norwich Youth for Christ Gospel Choir will fill Norwich Cathedral on Saturday May 15. The evening will also include the Bishop of Norwich and Roy Crowne, former Director of British Youth for Christ.

The popular NYFC Gospel Choir will present an uplifting evening of music in the beautiful and majestic setting of Norwich Cathedral from 7pm.

The Bishop of Norwich, the Right Revd Graham James is hosting what is sure to be a vibrant evening full of inspiration, including a chance to hear from special guest Roy Crowne, who is also Vice-President of British Youth for Christ.

NYFC Gospel Choir is made up of young people from all over Norfolk and has been growing not only in size, but in their reputation for putting smiles on the faces of all those who see them, so book your tickets early to avoid disappointment.

Schools Worker Heather Feltham, who leads NYFC Gospel Choir said: "The special thing about this choir is the community aspect and creating a place where young people can feel a sense of identity, purpose and belonging within the framework of God's love.

"It is hard to describe how wonderful it has been to see what God has done and is doing through this project and in the lives of the young people who attend. Please come and see for yourself, and to support these amazing young people who are very excited about this big event in the choir's calendar. It should be a fantastic event!"

Tickets at £8 (£5 concessions) are now available from the Network Norfolk online shop, at www.networknorfolk.co.uk/shop, Norwich Cathedral or Norwich Youth For Christ (01603) 620678 subject to availability.

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