

GOOD NEWS

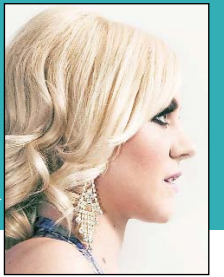
FOR NORWICH & NORFOLK

Christmas 2014

Inside

Sting in the tale - 2
Christmas hope - 5
White Christmas - 7
BGT tour slot - 8 ▶

supplement produced by
Celebrate Norwich & Norfolk



I've found what I'm looking for says Bono



Hit by a bus - but it was no joke

People often joke 'you could be hit by a bus tomorrow'. But that is exactly what happened to one young mother, except she was also 33 weeks' pregnant at the time - and it was no joke.

As she pulled on her coat one cold March morning in 2011 simply to fetch some lunch, 33 weeks' pregnant Isla Monk, daughter of Brian and Elspeth Fawcett of Poringland near Norwich, had no idea that she wouldn't be returning home until three months later.

Heading out, having spent the morning with husband Tim on preparations for their third child's arrival, Isla was knocked down by a bus on a pedestrian crossing in the centre of Croydon, suffering life-threatening injuries. Traffic came to a standstill as Isla was pulled out and whisked by air ambulance to London's major trauma centre at St George's Hospital.

Hungry husband Tim, awaiting Isla's return, saw the police car pull up outside their home. The Police would only say "your wife has been in an accident, you need to come with us!", he recalls. While gathering things together, he knew he could do with some help, so straightaway rang Isla's mother, asking her to pray for her daughter and if she could come down from Norfolk.

An emergency C-section to still unconscious Isla soon saw tiny premature 'Baby Girl Monk' delivered and rushed down to the Special Care Baby Unit. For mum Isla, kept in intensive care for days, it became clear that apart from severe brain injury, a cracked skull and ribs, there was, miraculously, no other major damage or ongoing bleeding. But the outlook would take weeks to



Isla and
Sophie Monk.

assess - Isla was immobile, confused and suffering from big memory loss.

Family, friends and members from Beulah Family Church, which the couple attended, all rallied round swiftly and practically. One couple from the church came to comfort Tim as he waited outside the trauma theatre; Isla's mother raced down from Poringland that afternoon, and father Brian flew back from Africa; a sister took the older children for a couple of days.

Meanwhile, home life needed to carry on

without mum. As Isla remained in hospital, Beulah church organised a meals rota and friends collected the older children from nursery and school. With the still-nameless Baby Girl Monk discharged after a fortnight, family cared for her at nights once Tim returned to work.

Grandparents Brian and Elspeth stayed for much of the next six months, camping in the front room, helping with children and home life, criss-crossing south London to visit their slowly

■ **Story continues on page four**

■ **ROCK STAR** Bono has opened up about his Christian faith, declaring: "I pray to the risen Jesus."

The U2 frontman, who is also famous for his humanitarian and philanthropic work, revealed how he holds family prayer meetings and gets his inner strength from God.

Speaking to Irish TV station RTE One, Bono - real name Paul Hewson - said: "I pray to the risen Jesus. Jesus went around saying he was the Messiah. That's why he was crucified. He was crucified because he said he was the Son of God."

"So he either, in my view, was the Son of God, or he was nuts. And I find it hard to accept that millions and millions of lives, half the earth, for 2,000 years, have been touched, have felt their lives touched and inspired by some nutter. I just don't believe it."

The singer, 53, said his wife Ali and their four children - Eve, Jordan, Elijah and John - share his Christian beliefs.

He revealed: "I pray to get to know the will of God, because then the prayers have more chance of coming true. I mean, that's the thing about prayer."

"We don't do it in a very lofty way in our family. It's just a bunch of us on the bed, usually - we've a very big bed in our house. We pray with all our kids and we read the Scriptures. We sometimes just slip into church and find some peace and quiet and say our own prayers."

Aside from his prolific music career, Bono is an avid social entrepreneur. In 2002, he co-founded DATA, an AIDS and poverty awareness organisation that went on to form 'ONE: The Campaign To Make Poverty History'.

His faith has been an ongoing factor in his advocacy work, and it even cropped up in the lyrics of some of his most famous U2 hits including 'I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For', 'Tomorrow' and 'The Wanderer'.

Bono is one of the stars singing on the new version of the charity single Do They Know It's Christmas. He also featured on the original single 30 years ago. This year's version is to raise money to tackle Ebola in West Africa.

■ Story from www.newlife.co.uk

■ Picture of Bono at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, courtesy of Moritz Hager.

GOOD NEWS

FOR NORWICH & NORFOLK

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 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 Easter edition is Friday February 27. Distribution is from Friday March 20.

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What is the 'must have' gift this Christmas?

■ "Daddy, I would like that for Christmas..." so said one of my children, whilst pointing at the television screen in response to an advert before her programme started.

I am sure this will be, or has been, the experience of many a parent through the years. Year by year, advertisers seek to persuade both the young and the old what the 'must have' gift for them will be this year.

It is interesting to see how that has changed through the years. In 1936 it was Monopoly; 1943 brought us the Slinky; by 1960 the Etch a Sketch was all the rage; the Rubik's Cube presumably frustrated many on Christmas Day in 1980. By the late 80s, technology was well and truly taking over: 1989 was the year of the Game Boy; the Tamagotchi (digital pet you looked after) was hugely popular in 1997; and recent years have seen games consoles, smart phones



Rev Mark Fairweather-Tall, pastor of Norwich Central Baptist Church

and tablets as the 'must have' gifts.

According to Christians, there is only one 'must have' gift at Christmas - Jesus, the greatest gift of all time. The Bible tells us that the baby who has been born will be called 'Immanuel' which means 'God with us'; God came in human form to live among us.

Why would God do this? At the heart of Christianity is the belief that God loves us and desires to be in relationship with us. All too

often, we reject God's way and choose our own and this breaks the relationship. We need someone to put us right with God.

Jesus came and showed us how we can live as part of the family of God. He taught us what this might mean and he was willing to die that we might be forgiven. It may be hard for us to understand how the death of Jesus releases power into the world making it possible for us to live new lives full of peace, hope and love. But many have discovered that this is so.

Jesus is the 'must have' gift for Christmas because the deepest needs of the human heart can be met through him. If we want to be loved, known and accepted for who we are; to experience peace, hope and love; then the wonderful news of Christmas is that this is possible because of Jesus. That really is something worth celebrating.

Glimpse of eternity after jellyfish sting

A man who technically died for 20 minutes has told a Norwich audience how he glimpsed eternity after a 'fatal' accident while night fishing off the coast of Mauritius. **Mike Wiltshire** reports.

Ian McCormack told how he had been stung by five Cubo-Medusan Boxer Jellyfish, the second most deadly creature known to man. One sting could kill in four minutes.

Staggering ashore, Ian, then 24, fought for his life, unaware that his Christian mum in New Zealand had suddenly seen her son's face - and prayed earnestly for him around that very moment.

Paralysed and dying, Ian was rushed to hospital. There, he had visions of heaven and hell - and although an atheist, he cried out half-forgotten phrases from the Lord's Prayer.

What happened next was a life-changing experience in which Ian says that Jesus empowered him to live - "so that he might tell his story to others."

Doctors had even issued a death certificate, but Ian came back to life on a slab in the morgue 20 minutes after he had been declared dead by medical staff. He was paralyzed from the neck down, but he prayed to be healed and walked out of the hospital the next day.

It was the start of a remarkable adventure of faith which has been told in film and on TV and to audiences around the world. Ian's remarkable story is also the theme of a recent feature film, *The Perfect Wave*, starring Scott Eastwood (son of Clint Eastwood).

Speaking at a Norwich dinner recently, Ian

said his remarkable life-after-death experience was as vivid today as when it happened 30 years ago.

"No matter how many things you have done wrong, you can cry out to God and He will hear you," he said.

Ian recalled how, in his dying moments, he struggled to remember the words in the Lord's Prayer about the need to forgive others - and he felt a desperate need to forgive those who had hurt him. "With surrender and humility came incredible peace," said Ian. "I was changed forever and the presence of God has never left me."

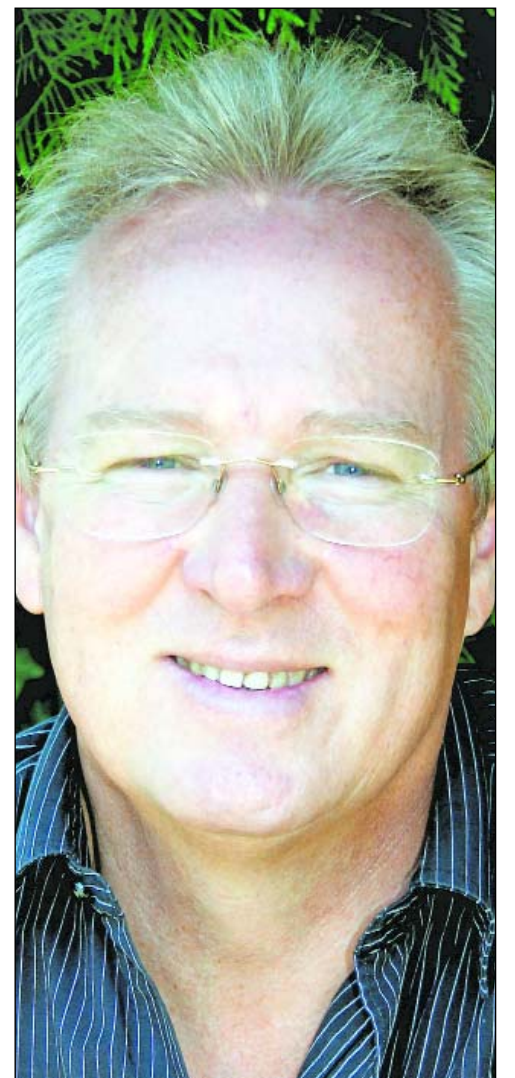
"Comfort, peace and extraordinary joy came as waves of unconditional love and acceptance hit me. The love I had for my family was just a thimbleful in comparison. There was no fear of judgment, my sins were forgiven and forgotten, causing me to cry for the first time since I was 14."

"I saw the form of a man who was radiant and dazzling white - the light of the universe was shining out of his face. I felt the innocence of a small child returning; I felt holy. There was also a new earth - a crystal clear river and beautiful rolling hills," said Ian.

Ian said he initially had fearful glimpses of hell. "I could feel the evil; it was all around me but I had given my life to the Shepherd of men's souls when I prayed from the heart - and it couldn't touch me. I felt like a speck of dust being drawn up into a radiant light and delivered out of the kingdom of darkness."

After his experience, Ian read the Bible in six weeks. "We can't clean ourselves up for salvation - we need God," said Ian, who is now an ordained minister and leads the King's Gate Church in London with wife Jane.

In Norwich, Ian was guest speaker at the Christmas dinner of the Full Gospel Businessmen at the Brook Hotel, Bowthorpe.



Survivor, Ian McCormack.

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Faith that helped city Sheriff face up to death

For a man who has faced up to the grim reality of death on a daily basis for the last 19 years as Norfolk county coroner, **Sheriff of Norwich William Armstrong** has a faith which has helped sustain him while questioning matters of life and death. **Kevin Gotts** reports.

After practicing as a solicitor for some 30 years in Norwich, specialising in mental health and child care issues, William is perhaps more widely known for his subsequent role as the Norfolk Coroner.

During his tenure, William extended the traditional role of Coroner and explains: "I introduced a number of radical reforms including the setting up of a support service and the first chaplaincy service in the country. I also established a new purpose-designed court and introduced new procedures to make grieving family members the focus of attention at inquest hearings.

"I believe strongly that the Coroner should relate directly and personally with the bereaved. Just as every life is unique, so every death is unique. Every one grieves in their own way. I always kept in mind that death is not the end and there is another and fuller life beyond our earthly existence. Supporting the bereaved is an enormous privilege."

These years have given him an



Sheriff of Norwich William Armstrong.

enduring interest in the prevention of suicide and the improvement of care for those suffering mental illness. Each suicide that came before him raised questions of how co-ordination between services could be improved - by compassionate and professional care; and good communication between GPs and community services.

William is Norfolk born and bred, choosing to live in the countryside and be a part of his small local church community. "We are all creatures of a loving God. Everyone has something unique to give, and should have their good

qualities recognised," he said.

His is a faith with more questions than answers, and he approaches the strong beliefs of others with openness and respect; confessing the incoherence of his own faith. When he has to reach an important decision he tries to be aware of his own prejudices and not to prejudge anyone, listening carefully and keeping an open mind.

He is now chairman of health watchdog Healthwatch Norfolk, which seeks to ensure that less fortunate people gain access to health care.

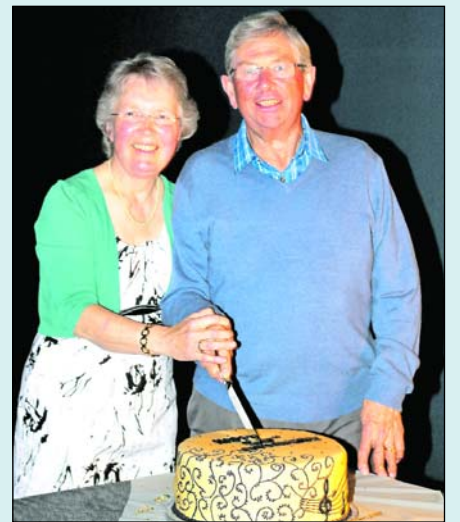
In June, William was appointed as the Sheriff of Norwich. Besides attending a large number of events, he sees it a tremendous privilege to get about amongst the people, finding out what makes Norwich the place it is and, in particular, encouraging local voluntary organisations and fostering a spirit of community.

"We have in this city a strong history of voluntarism with a massive number of churches and other organisations doing splendid work, often without recognition. I want to support and endorse their work."

He has seen and is deeply moved by deprivation within Norwich. "There are some disturbing facts which we should not ignore. According to Norwich Foodbank, 30,000 people in greater Norwich are living on the edge of poverty. Norwich was in the top 5 per cent of local authorities in the UK for child poverty and in one year Norwich Foodbank has provided over 9,000 people with three days' worth of food," he said.

"Norwich must be fair not just for some but for all. I hope I can have a role in encouraging people to reach out to the impoverished, the marginalised, the disadvantaged and the isolated. They too must also be part of the story."

In recent months, he was appointed as a Lay Canon of Norwich Cathedral. Bishop Graham James paid tribute, saying: "William's Christian faith is deep and profound, as is his love of our Cathedral Church. I decided to make him a Lay Canon of the Cathedral in honour of the way in which he has lived his Christian faith so fully through his work. I'm sure he will relish the chance to serve the Cathedral in the coming years in this new capacity. He is always a blessing to others."



Couple celebrate 50 years together

■ A Norwich couple have celebrated 50 years of marriage and 40 years of serving the community through a church they founded.

The golden wedding celebration of David and Ruth Southgate from Hellesdon, held at Soul Church in Mason Road, was an amazing evening of tribute to their commitment and dedication over 50 years to serving and strengthening the bonds of community in Hellesdon and the wider city.

Using narrative, music and videos the evening told of how, with the support of others, the couple had established Meadow Way Chapel in Hellesdon in the early 1970s.

Starting with a tent mission, then moving into a mobile classroom and eventually the current building, guests heard how they have diligently and unpretentiously served the community.

They have been involved in children's work and supporting the elderly, but it has predominantly been through music that they have continuously shared their Christian faith.

Around 300 friends and family enjoyed the well presented multi-media evening of music and song with much of the music provided by the All Souls Orchestra of Langham Place in London and its well-known Director of Music Noel Tredinnick.

Noel and the orchestra have worked with David and Ruth over many years of putting on Prom Praise events in Norwich.

At the end of the evening, David took the opportunity to thank everyone for their love and support and said: "Our purpose in everything has been to bring glory to God for all He has done for myself and Ruth."

By Les Champion



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Isla was knocked down by a bus

■ Story continued from page one

recovering daughter. "We just got on with it, - and God delivered," they recall.

After a month of post-traumatic amnesia, Isla got a rare space at a specialist rehabilitation unit, where she re-learned basic things like balancing, walking and talking with expression, before progressing to the domestic tasks such as cooking, shopping, baking and washing.

Within three months of the life-threatening accident, she was discharged to her family "for ever and ever" according to her delighted five-year-old daughter.

Finally, four months after the accident, the Christian couple named their daughter Sophie, after getting special dispensation from the registration authorities to delay until Isla could be involved in the decision.

When Isla, who attended Springwood High School in King's Lynn and now lives in Cambridge, is asked: "Do you ever wonder why it should happen to you?" her reply is: "Why not me?" She still cannot remember what happened, nor anything from the next three months.

Today, new acquaintances would be unaware that the dynamic mother or colleague they meet had experienced such a dramatic incident and suffered such severe brain damage.

Talking about her experiences publicly for the first time, Isla said: "People say 'you might get knocked down by a bus'..... I actually was, - but God has done an amazing thing for me. It's such a privilege - I am still here!"

God-given talent of Sewing Bee TV finalist

Chinelo Bally, who shot to fame as BBC TV's popular Sewing Bee finalist, helped to button-up Hub Community Project's charity auction in Wymondham earlier this year when one of her unique creations went under the hammer. Sandie Shirley reports.

The Sewing Bee series, that also spotlighted the young designer's Christian faith, was aired earlier this year and has helped her win commissions from well-known women keen for a Chinelo Bally creation.

The African-born 26 year-old, who lives in Laindon, Essex, showcased her skills on TV with a succession of stunning, elegant and colourful designs yet the woman with a big heart for God will tell you she has no natural talent.

"God is the most important aspect of my life and I ask him to endow my hands with excellence so this is really his work. I put the whole mission of designing in his hands when I pray,"

says the hip Essex media graduate who donated a children's dress this summer in a bold African print to help the Wymondham community.

With a fervent desire to sew she spent a week in church during a prayer retreat crying out in faith for ability while she was still young with the passion and energy to use it.

And use it she has in front of millions of viewers and two keen-eyed judges when she narrowly missed out on winning the trophy. In eight weeks, as the assignments became more taxing, she won national acclaim and fame that has been the springboard for her dream to become a successful international fashion designer with her own studio and staff. She also hopes the publicity will heighten her voice as an activist against child abuse and domestic violence.

The sewing programme has helped publicise her sewing blog and workshops to empower and teach others the art of freehand cutting and sewing which she learnt from her aunt, a tailor.

She blends her native vibrant culture with the classic Western silhouettes that she has come to love since moving to England from Nigeria with her church pastor, parents and siblings when she was just four.

With less than three years' experience, she frequently outshone far more seasoned Sewing Bee competitors with



Sewing Bee finalist Chinelo Bally.

risky, elaborate designs that pushed the boundaries of innovation without using a pattern. Using silk, velvet, satin, organza and net with beads, flowers or bows she transformed the palest fabrics or brightest prints or a combination of both. She also remodelled existing garments including a wedding dress and man's suit into stylish eye-catching creations. Her skills took her to the top of the class on numerous occasions, winning approval from judges, Savile Row designer, Patrick Grant and 40-year experienced sewer and teacher, May Martin, to help her beat seven other amateur sewers to a place in the final.

Chinelo explains that her husband, Tunde, is her greatest fan and backbone. Recognising her eagerness to sew when she could not find clothes she liked, he bought his wife's first sewing machine and her later industrial ones.

The determined young designer rallied against nerves and difficulties during the BBC series with the support and prayers of her family and church and viewers often heard her frantic pleas for divine assistance.

She says: "I love my church - it really does get behind people with support. My pastor, who is like a second

mum to me, prayed and encouraged me throughout the series, which was important.

"Yes, I am a child of God and I want others to know that being a Christian does not mean you cannot be cool and beautiful - it just means you can be yourself," says Chinelo who wants to be a role model to other young women who know her.

"I want God to use what I do for him since he is the driving force behind it. Sexual abuse of children and domestic violence pulls at my heart-strings," says Chinelo, who is part of her church ministry to help its victims. "I want to work hard with bespoke fashion and be a showcase for the world so my voice as an activist can be reckoned with in higher places," says the woman who also draws, bakes and uses her creative skills at her Pentecostal church.

The choir are all sewn-up in her matching creations and she recently made tote bags for those attending her church annual women's seminar. The stunning backdrop in church is also her handiwork and she even baked a birthday cake for her pastor recently.

"God has blessed my hands," says Chinelo who has made it her business to bless others through them.

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Trainee minister revving up for new role

■ Bruno Boldrini, an Italian former accountant, who is now a minister-in-training in Norwich, says he is 'overjoyed' to be serving at Bowthorpe Church.

The son of a senior Italian banker, Bruno grew up as a Catholic and 'knew from the age of seven that there was a call on his life to serve God in some way' - although he rebelled in his teenage years.

A keen motor-cyclist and sportsman, Bruno, who enjoys tennis and boxing training, was also a promising skier in his youth. He served with the Italian military before coming to the UK 20 years ago, when he worked as an accountant in Manchester.

At the age of ten, Bruno was inspired by his Christian grandmother, Maria, a gifted artist who not only read Bible stories to him but also drew pictures of Bible characters. "Jesus became very real to me," recalls Bruno.

But pressures in life at the age of 34 caused Bruno to seek God in earnest, and his early call to ministry was reawakened. He gave up a well-paid job in the financial world to follow his calling.

Now, at 45, he is nearing the end of his formal training and describes himself as "very evangelical and delighted to be serving with the ecumenical church in Bowthorpe."

He is studying at Westminster College, Cambridge, a centre of learning for the United Reformed Church.

Bruno's wife, Victoria, is a pharmacist, and they and their children live at Worlingham, near Beccles.



Bruno Boldrini on his motorbike in Norwich.

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Hope at Christmas

Yes, Christmas can be a scary time," says the Rev Margaret Whitaker, who is aware that there are more family break-ups - and suicides - at Christmas than at any other time of the year.

Whilst training for the Christian ministry in her 50s, Margaret's own life was transformed 20 years ago while working at Hebron House, Norwich - the intensely supportive community for women in recovery from drug and alcohol problems, as well as abuse.

The caring experience at Hebron House was foundational in Margaret's future ministry, giving her insights into the deep needs in many lives. Margaret has never forgotten "the God-led transformations where broken lives were so changed," when former residents were able to move and be trained to help others.

The experience "confirmed my calling into ministry," says Margaret. "We learned how to 'drop the mask,' to be real with ourselves, real with God, and with others."

Now Margaret's life is changing again, since she will be 70 next year and retiring as Rector of Horsford, Felthorpe and Hevingham. Margaret is "very excited" about her vision to open a retreat house at Ludham - "a space for anyone who wants to know more of what God has to show them."

Margaret was born in Edinburgh with a Godly heritage - her Christian grandmother, Maggie, was a missionary who worked in West Africa with the famous Mary Slessor, (1848-1915), the pioneering Scottish missionary who not only helped to spread the "good news" of Jesus Christ, but also promoted the rights of women and children.

Margaret is a strong woman of faith, although she admits that in younger years she was curious about the occult but came to see the dangers "and the fact that the occult is counterfeit and untrue." The unsettling



Rev Margaret Whitaker.

experience, however, has given her wisdom is helping people who stray into this area in their search for answers.

Today, Margaret's faith is "firmly rooted in the truth of the Bible, and in prayer," amidst a very busy schedule in the local community. Margaret loves being involved in the Bible Society's popular 'Open the Book' story-telling project with primary school children. In the UK, more than 10,000 people present stories using drama, mime, costume and audience participation.

As Christmas approaches, Margaret longs to see more people realise that "Jesus is the reason for the season."

Many people, she adds, have "a very foggy idea about who Jesus is ... but to make that discovery is to experience the reality of God's redeeming love - the greatest gift of all."

A compassionate Norfolk minister has a message of hope for those people whose lives run into problems at Christmas. **Mike Wiltshire** reports.

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Norfolk churches say they care

■ Death, suffering, relationship and family problems, disappointment and injustice are the burning issues that most concern people across Norfolk, according to the 20,000 who responded to a recent survey by 60 local churches.

And in response to the "Who Cares?" survey, many of those same churches are now taking steps to help people understand the challenges that are really causing pain in their lives and offer programmes of practical support and hope.

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Prison encounter transforms Clint

Convicted drugs smuggler and addict **Clint Holmes** discovered a new meaning to life in prison and is now helping to lead a **Norwich** church. **Mike Wiltshire** reports.

After becoming hooked on drugs, Clint Holmes was forced by an armed gang to help import a 10-ton consignment of cannabis in a shipping container - "we know where your family live," they warned him.

But armed Police and Customs were tipped off about the plan, and Clint found himself pinned to the floor in handcuffs, as a police helicopter hovered over the warehouse and police dogs growled at the four suspects involved.

In a remarkable turnaround, Clint - who was sentenced to five-and-half years in prison - is now a free man, a convinced Christian, and a leader with Matt Richards of Radical Church which began in Norwich last February.

Clint, who is now happily married to Lois, has a passion to reach marginalised people who, like himself, have struggled with addictions and troubled relationships.

The eldest of five children, Clint grew up in a very troubled home in Nottingham. As a teenager he longed for a career in football until his dream was dashed by a knee injury.

Like many boys on his estate he began drinking at 13 and by 16 was caught up in gangs of angry hooligans. His alcohol tolerance climbed so high, he switched to cannabis and other drugs that gave him a bigger 'high' and a rush of confidence.

He managed to hold down several jobs and assisted in a night shelter where he met a Chinese man linked to the Triad criminal network.

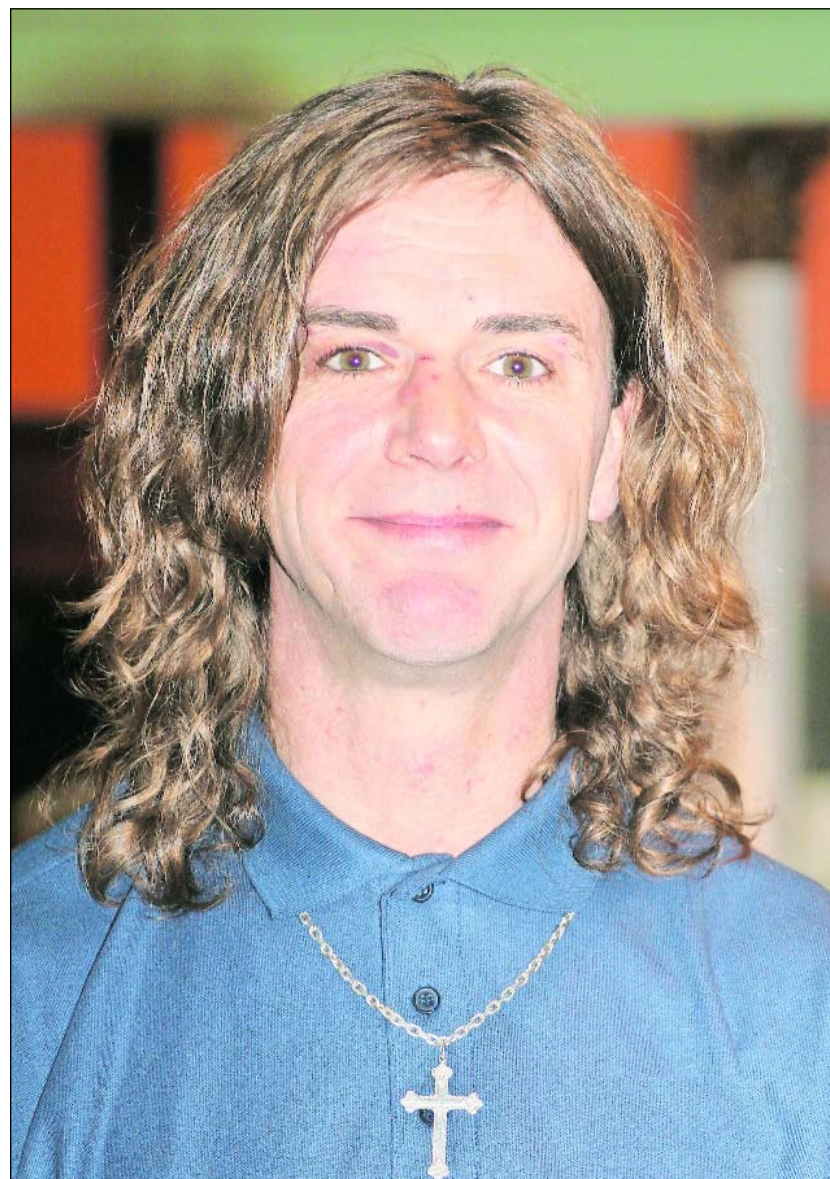
Clint, still struggling with drug addiction and failed relationships, was offered cannabis and pure cocaine - and then told, under threat, that he must assist the gang "which was run on fear and paranoia".

The plan was to import a huge quantity of vacuum-packed cannabis into the UK in a container which supposedly contained only candles.

After the failed crime, Clint spent 13 months on remand and saw "terrible violence" in prison. He was put on suicide watch along with other disturbed prisoners. One inmate tried to speak to Clint "about hope in God," but Clint just swore at him.

Then he saw a man "beaten to a pulp" as guards turned away - so Clint asked to be put in solitary confinement to escape the violence.

"I hated myself," Clint recalls. "I just sat there in total darkness and - with a



New meaning to life: Clint Holmes.

razor blade - planned to end it all. I just prayed, 'Oh God . . .' and though my eyes were shut, I suddenly felt the cell fill with intense light. I just felt pure love all over me. I knew straight away it was Jesus . . . I knew it was Him."

A few days later, Bill, a prison chaplain on the 'block', asked: "Does anyone want communion?" Clint gladly accepted, and in the chaplain's office, he took the sacraments - "it was a very big thing for me".

In his new love for Jesus Christ, Clint avidly read the Bible, writing down chosen scriptures so he could remember them.

Prison staff noticed the big change in his life. A rehab manager who had dabbled in the occult became a Christian - and Clint was soon helping in prison chapel services which grew rapidly as more men attended. Clint was so overjoyed by his new-found faith that he was breathalysed in prison to see if he been drinking too much of the communion wine.

He was shocked, however, when a liberal church minister asked him, "You don't actually believe this stuff do

you?" This only toughened Clint's resolve to follow Christ and he wasn't bothered when men on the landings shouted, "Here comes the God squad!" as he walked by.

Clint, a chapel orderly, became an unofficial prison chaplain - "even the governor knew it."

Today, Clint believes that large sections of the church are asleep. "We need a bigger heart for the community," he says. "There are so many addicts out there. But I'm sticking close to God."

His experiences have propelled him to avidly support Radical Church in Norwich. The group meets at various venues for outreach meetings including Frere Road Community Centre in Heartsease and St Stephen's Church in Chapelfield, Norwich.

Clint's has seen God provide for his needs in answer to prayer. His faith in Christ has taken him far afield, even to India, and he has served faithfully with the Street Pastors and has a special regard for the elderly.

For more about Radical Church, Norwich, contact Matt Richards on 07833 498 562.



Above, Graham Cole as General Waverley in *White Christmas* and, right, the musical's chorus line.

TV's Graham Cole set to enjoy a White Christmas

■ Stage and TV star Graham Cole, who lives in Norfolk, says he is 'having the time of his life' in Irving Berlin's musical, *White Christmas* at London's Dominion Theatre. The spectacular show has received standing ovations.

Wroxham-resident Graham - best known for his role as PC Tony Stamp in ITV's long-running police drama, *'The Bill'* - was awarded an OBE last year for services to the voluntary and charitable giving sector in UK.

Six-foot-two Graham plays the part of General Waverley in the musical spectacular which also stars Welsh singer Aled Jones, well-known through BBC's *Songs of Praise*. Amid all the glitz of showbusiness, Graham is a man of faith who, as a teenager, responded to the message of evangelist Dr Billy Graham at Earl's Court in 1966.

"I firmly believe that Jesus is with me and He influences every decision I make. And the way I

choose to live my life is a reflection of what He means to me," says Graham.

For decades, Graham has worked hard as a 'celebrity ambassador' to support children's charities, such as Childline, working with the show business charity, the Grand Order of Water Rats that does a lot to help children in need.

"Being able to do the job I love and assist various charities means a lot," says Graham, whose son works in the charity sector. His daughter, Laura is an actress.

"We all love walking along the Norfolk beaches and being together as a family. I met Cherry in 1974 when I was a Butlin's Redcoat - and she's always been my rock.

"Cherry has helped me to stay sane in a rewarding but insane profession."

White Christmas, based on the movie classic, is described by *The Times* as "a big glittering greeting card of a show." It runs until January 3.

Chris provides a listening ear

Building relationships is key to the work of **Rev Chris Copsey**, chaplain to **Norfolk County Council** and the **Norfolk Coroner**. **Kevin Gotts** reports.



Based in West Norfolk, Chris spends one and a half days each week at County Hall in Norwich, ready to meet with and support workers there.

"Chaplaincy has changed, where once there was time to chat with people at their desks, now everyone is so busy. The role is being a listening ear, as I am independent of the Council, providing pastoral care, encouraging, supporting, signposting to other services. Also being there for those of any faith or none who are in any kind of need," said Chris.

The "Quiet Space" room provided offers a place to meditate, pray or just sit, as does a "Peace Area" outside. "A small and faithful group of Christians' meet weekly, where we hold the building, people and activities in prayer. There are a lot of balances to hold in the working place especially. It is important to promote dignity, respect and grace."

Every two months the Full Council meets, when Chris prepares and leads the prayers relevant to the moment. "Often Councillors will ask for prayers for their areas," she states.

Chris is able to coordinate particular reflection times, accessible to people of all faiths, (e.g. Remembrance Day, Holocaust Day and other occasions that the Council or members of staff might wish to mark publicly).

Chris is a former teacher, and was ordained as an Anglican Deacon in 2007 and as Priest in 2008. Before ordination training she was a Reader for nine years across seven rural parishes and a curate at King's Lynn.

Her other main role is three days a week working with the Norfolk Coroner Jacqueline Lake at the Coroners Court in Thorpe Road, Norwich or the King's Lynn County Court.

"This is a fascinating and rewarding ministry to have, where law and grace come together. It is a formal legal process but people are met with sympathy and empathy and there is support available at this difficult time," Chris explains.

She supports the Coroner and officers and, when requested, family and relatives at and after inquests. There are strong relationships with the police and contributions to a Suicide Prevention Group.

A number of workplaces, including Norfolk County Council and the Coroner's Office are specifically supported by Good Work, an ecumenical industrial mission. Chris works with them developing chaplaincies across Norfolk. Good Work supports everyone from janitors and dinner ladies to seafarers, shop workers, laundry workers, wheelie bin collectors, hospital workers, sugar producers, engineers and chief executives.

Contact Chris at chriscopsey@btinternet.com.

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Philippa makes BGT tour



Musician songwriter, **Philippa Hanna**, has wowed international audiences and appeared at the O2 with **Lionel Richie** but in November she took centre stage at **Mulbarton** village hall and is set to embark on a whirlwind tour with **Britain's Got Talent** winners, **Collabro**, in the New Year.

Sandie Shirley reports.

Pretty, blonde and talented, the thoroughly modern lass from Sheffield is stirring hearts and souls with her unique musical talent that flows out of her love for her creator.

Philippa's songs are a harvest of restorative joy telling out her turn-around from a depressed adolescent who just watched TV and took Prozac and later escaped from a difficult relationship.

"She says: 'It is never too late to turn everything around after failure and difficulty and start again - my life is unrecognisable from a decade ago.'"

Her resounding message of hope is sown into every composition after a dramatic shift in her circumstances when she placed her life in her maker's hand. He has healed her heart, made her bold and taken her into arenas of influence that she could only have dreamed about. It has included writing her life story and becoming an advocate for Compassion UK, travelling to the poorest areas of the world to help alleviate suffering.

As she sings to audiences, she says: "I can feel God's love and affection and how he dotes on us for we are all beautifully and wonderfully made and God's workmanship."

Her four albums, tours and book, Following the Breadcrumbs - charting her journey from darkness to light - give hope to broken women and turn grown men to tears particularly when she sings one of her favourite songs - Raggedy Doll - which took barely an hour to compose. "Whenever I

play it there's a crazy reaction as its simplicity awakens something of the child within us. Once I owned a doll that lost all its hair but it was my favourite toy; the song is really a metaphor about how God loves us warts and all."

Her life-changing compositions reveal her former struggles. Beginning secondary school she was lonely and adrift, knowing none of her peers. "I used to dread school - the pressures of wearing the right shoes and getting my hair right. I found school difficult socially and academically and I felt like the odd one out - a bit awkward and not perfect. I put on an attitude and felt out of my depth and rebelled before knuckling down in the fifth year, scraping the qualifications needed to study pop music at college."

But when news of the outbreak of the fatal CJD disease hit the media, Philippa was gripped by fear and anxiety about her health which led to depression and anti-depressants. "I dropped out of college at 16 or 17 afraid of life and I was not certain that I would reach adulthood. When the medication kicked-in I stopped taking it. I was convinced it was not the answer, knowing I had to address what was in me. I auditioned for girl bands, concerts - anything I could - but my confidence was knocked severely when there were no openings."

At 18 she began song writing for someone else and was "trapped" in a two-year, fruitless relationship that ended in tears. Philippa was searching for life's answers when she met a new friend who had

recently found his Saviour.

"I saw something in him that I had not seen in anyone else. He had trouble in his life but he was living with peace and freedom. When I met his church friends, I saw the same thing, thinking maybe Jesus and this freedom is the answer."

"Eventually I felt my heart melt while singing songs about Jesus. I needed to be found and rescued and in my heart I asked that if God was real he would get through to me and give me a new life."

Philippa's difficulties began to change. "I found I was not helpless any more. Tiny bits of God's plan followed as he put people and scriptures in my path. Initially my music represented heartache and disappointment and that I was a failure and a loser. I was prepared to give it up but I saw that God created me with musical talent."

"I knew I should be a song writer so I let him move me into church worship which reawakened my talent where I was wrapped around by a community who loved my songs. It was the first time I was encouraged apart from my family and the odd fan. My singing emerged as my voice changed as though I was a bird released from a cage and I took up the guitar."

"The songs are a way of storytelling - denoting the little milestones in my life of self-esteem, family and marriage."

Philippa is working on her new album for next spring and from January to March she will be touring with the 2014 Britain's Got Talent winners Collabro, sharing her music with millions.

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