



# Film of hope follows brain tumour shock

When told he had an inoperable brain tumour, **Dan Lawrence**, a Christian youth worker from **Dereham**, set about making an inspirational 80-minute film about death, faith and hope. **Jenny Seal** reports.

In early 2015, Dan, recently married to Kim, found out he was suffering from an aggressive and inoperable brain tumour.

His response to the devastating diagnosis was in keeping with his passions, his creativity and positive character. Dan wrote a screenplay called "Looking into Eternity", with the intention of turning it into a project to engage and benefit young people, and be filmed and acted by them.

"There's always been a difference in the way we do things and we would never just sit around," said Dan. "I don't think there has ever been a point where I thought: 'I can't be bothered'. There has always been something."

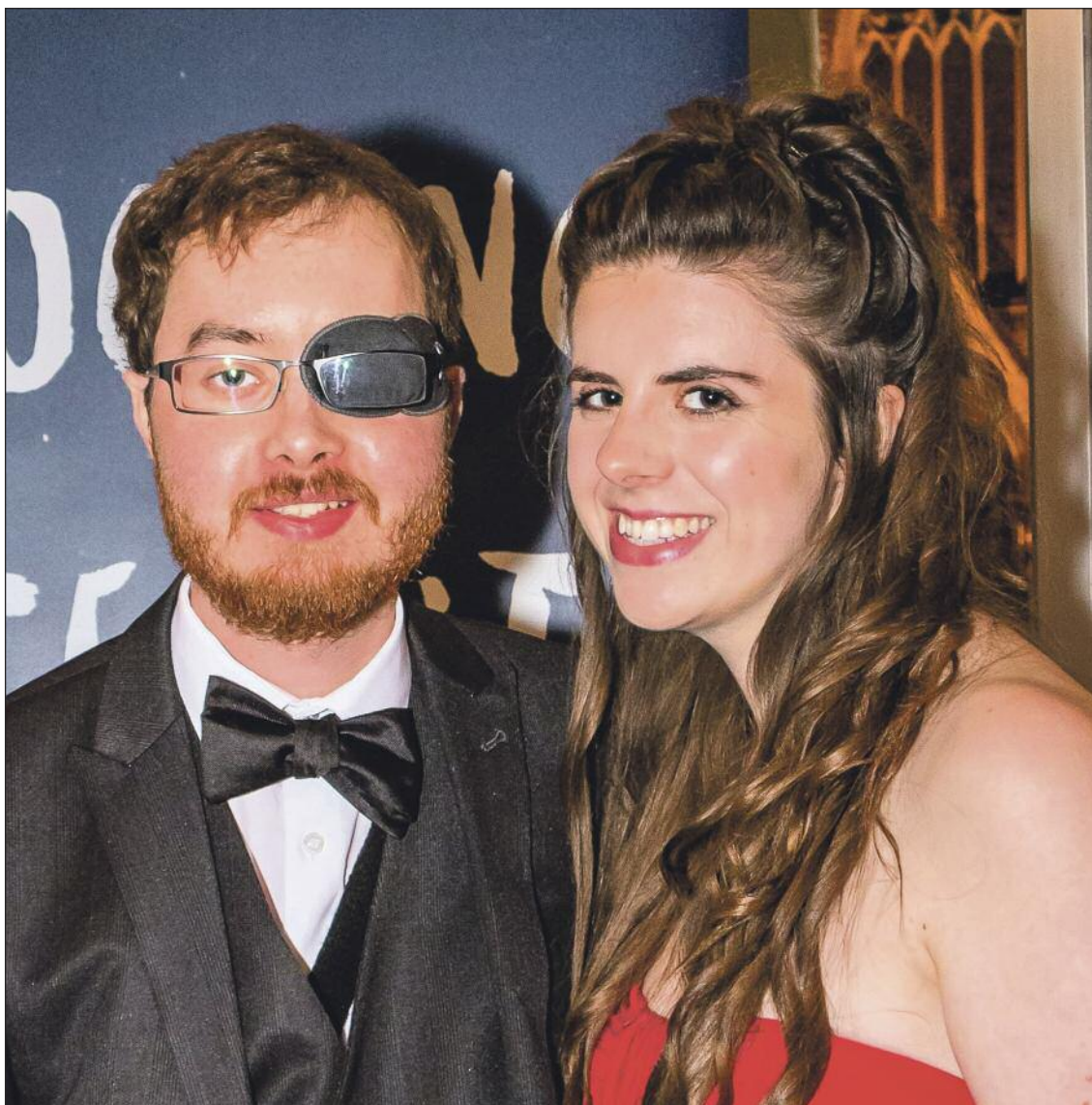
Dan, 25, has always had a faith, growing up attending Sprowston Methodist Church. Since 2010 he has been a youth worker for North Breckland Youth For Christ (YFC), specialising in projects where he can gently and patiently engage and encourage young people in media and creative initiatives, such as BreckFest Youth Radio, a filmed version of the Passion story and a new pantomime.

With the full support of North Breckland YFC, Dan focused on the script through his early radiotherapy treatment.

Now, following almost two years of hard work, Dan, North Breckland YFC, a cast and crew of young people and other key volunteers have turned that screenplay into the feature length film Looking to Eternity.

The film is the story of a grumpy young man called John who is diagnosed with terminal cancer. It follows the journey that he and his wife, Edy, go on through his illness, finding faith and ultimately joy.

The quality of the production is



Dan and Kim Lawrence at the premiere of Looking to Eternity in Dereham on November 4.

impressively professional, and the difficult subject matter is handled with sensitivity, intelligence, humour and uncompromising honesty.

*"So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal".*

**2 Corinthians 4:18**

Dan said: "It is a complicated matter but something that needs to be dealt with I think. And something that needs to be dealt with in a way that almost makes it comical at the same time, but in a way that there is a definite reason for it all."

The 80-minute film, shot over seven days, is an incredible achievement, given that the majority of the characters are played by young people who had never previously acted and many of the technical roles were carried out by young people learning as they went.

The inspiration for the film was a verse Dan read in his Bible. 2 Corinthians 4:18: "So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal". It has been a great source of comfort for the team during Dan's illness.

Ang Fox, Director of North Breckland YFC and the producer of 'Looking to Eternity' describes the film as 'a miracle'.

She said: "God's hand is just all

over it at every stage. His timing and provision all the way through has been amazing. We had an £8,000 budget and we came in on budget."

"If you talk to anyone in the industry they wouldn't believe it and the quality that has been produced in seven days is a miracle. The young people have been amazing. They have learned such a lot and they have shown a real example of what it is to work in unity and work towards a purpose."

The film was funded by The Jerusalem Trust with grants for equipment awarded by Breckland Youth Advisory Board, Barnham Broom Trust and Red House Youth Project. A professional film director, Jeremy Higham, gave guidance

■ Continues on page 4



James Corden. Picture by iDominick.

## James Corden says prayer saved him

■ James Corden, the British comedian who has successfully crossed 'the Pond' to host The Late Late Show in America, has revealed a critical moment in his life.

Corden credits the prayers of his Christian parents with saving him from a life of depression, partying and alcohol.

He told BBC Radio 4 that he was raised in a Christian home, but realised how far he had fallen from his upbringing after exhibiting "ungracious, ungrateful and brattish" behaviour at the 2008 BAFTA Awards.

"The person I had become wasn't the person I wanted to be," he told the Daily Mail.

Alone and depressed in his London apartment, his devout Christian parents made an "out of the blue" visit, as they had been worried about him.

"My dad said, 'I'm going to say a prayer for you'... He just put his arms around me and said, 'You've just got to get through this, son.' I started to cry... Dad said a prayer as he kissed my forehead, and Mum came over and joined the hug. I've no idea how long we stayed there, but it felt like a lifetime."

Four years later, Corden has turned his life around, has two children with his wife, Julia, and has become one of the most popular presenters in the US with his Late, Late Show carpool karaoke sketch featuring luminaries such as Michelle Obama, Britney Spears and Stevie Wonder.

Article courtesy of [www.goodnews-paper.org.uk](http://www.goodnews-paper.org.uk)



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# What is the true meaning of Christmas?

■ The middle of winter has long been a time of celebration around the world. Centuries before the arrival of Jesus, early Europeans celebrated light and birth in the darkest days of mid-winter and the winter solstice. The Scandinavians celebrated Yule by burning logs, the Germans honoured the pagan god Oden, and the Romans observed Saturnalia, a hedonistic worship of their god Saturn.

In the early years of Christianity, Easter was the main holiday - the birth of Jesus was not celebrated in England until the end of the sixth century and, apart from a break during Cromwell's reign, has been gaining in popularity, and



**Network Norfolk content editor Tony Rothe reflects on the many ways people choose to celebrate the Christmas season.**

commercial opportunities, ever since.

So, what is the true meaning of Christmas? To Christians the answer is obvious – the celebration of the birth of our Lord, saviour, mentor, guide and

best friend Jesus.

But not everyone will agree – The “true” meaning of Christmas for them might be meeting up with family and friends, giving and receiving gifts, decorating their house with light and colour,

treating their families to lovely food, giving to charity, helping others, or just chilling out after a hard autumn at work. To them, that is their reality, and each of these activities is fine in itself.

Should we chastise and condemn folks for simply wishing to have a good time, if that's what Christmas means to them? Is our criticism likely to introduce them to God's love and grace?

Let us joyfully celebrate the birth of God's Son in whatever way is right for us, both in church and by joining in more secular activities, but invite others to join us in our celebrations.

Let our positive enthusiasm for worshipping the Light of the World prove infectious as we share a very happy Christmas!

# Life-changing mission

**A Norwich teacher has devoted her retirement to raise tens of thousands of pounds to fund life-changing facilities for a camp of war victims in northern Uganda. Jenny Seal reports.**

**F**reda Lewis, a retired infant school teacher from Thorpe St Andrew, started the charity The Oasis of Life in 2004 to fundraise for the small camp of Ambalal in Northern Uganda, which then provided shelter for around 200 displaced people fleeing war-torn communities.

Freda, 73, who attends St Francis Church in Heartsease, began by collecting toys to take out to the children. “It sort of snowballed from there”, said Freda. “And I’ve been out to Uganda practically every year since.”

Since then Freda has fundraised for a school, and a house for the widowed leader of the camp.

In 2013, the Bishop of Norwich chose The Oasis of Life as one of his annual Lent Appeal projects. The appeal raised £14,500 and along with another £30,000 raised by Freda, the building of the 16-room, 51.5m long clinic is now complete.

Thanking supporters who have donated to the clinic, many from Norfolk, Freda said: “It is going to make such a vast, vast difference. This clinic is on the road between Lira and Soroti. It will be for the poorest of the poor. At the moment the people living there can’t get to the hospital. They have to go by wooden wheelbarrow; that is the only means of transport. So having the clinic out there will be absolutely brilliant.”

In order to protect the clinic’s long-term sustainability, Freda has deliberately ensured



**Visionary duo, Freda Lewis and Steven Puleh**

that local people have had ownership over the project from the beginning. The visionary behind the diagnostic clinic is Steven Puleh from Makerere University in Kampala. He will lead the project now that the building’s infrastructure is complete and it will be his responsibility to apply for government funding in order to staff and equip the facility.

Freda explains: “They have big plans for it including installing an operating theatre. But I will be a hindrance now if I keep raising money for it. My white face will stop them from getting a government grant because the attitude

is ‘she’s done it so she will keep going’ and there is no way I could fund that.”

So following a ribbon-cutting ceremony on October 23, Freda officially handed the project over to Steven, praying that funding will be awarded to get the medical facility up and running.

Freda is not planning any further trips to Uganda but she will continue fundraising.

You can find out more about The Oasis of Life at [www.theoasisoflife.co.uk](http://www.theoasisoflife.co.uk)

■ Read a longer version of this article at [www.networknorfolk.co.uk](http://www.networknorfolk.co.uk)

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# Mary's recipe for life

Cuisine queen, and prolific cookery book writer, **Mary Berry**, will be cooking up a Christmas treat for umpteen diners as she celebrates the birth of her Saviour Jesus Christ. **Sandie Shirley** reports.

**C**o-judge of the hugely popular BBC TV's 'The Great British Bake Off' has a quiet and steadfast Christian faith that has seen her through the joys, triumphs and sorrows including one of the deepest heartaches imaginable.

The 81 year-old, who has been hailed a national treasure, visited Norwich earlier this year to sign copies of her latest book: 'Foolproof Cooking'. During her previous televised trip to the city, a few years ago, she learnt that her great-great grandfather was a Norwich baker, when she took part in the BBC's 'Who Do You Think You Are?' programme.

Mary's adventurous life has been peppered with challenges and salted with kindness. As a young girl, she spent months in hospital – including time in isolation – recovering from polio. While planning a family, she endured a series of miscarriages and later suffered the tragic loss of her teenage son in a car accident.

She explains that William's death has changed her life and deepened her faith. "When you have faith and tragedy hits you, you have reason to go on and be strong," she told the Archbishop of York, John Sentamu, while presenting the BBC's Easter Feast programme this year.

The recipient of a host of awards, including the CBE, Mary has written more than 70 cookery books while her TV career has spanned four decades. She has cooked for VIPs; teamed up with various retailers to market her own products and fronted a host of TV specials while being guest of honour at glittering functions.

Yet her biggest break came in her mid-seventies when she became a judge for The Great British Bake Off which wooed more than 14 million viewers a few weeks ago as the BBC series ended.

'The Great British Bake Off' is family entertainment. There are not many programmes where all ages can sit and watch from beginning to end," she says.

Mary is a healthy eating and exercise advocate and her faith makes her mindful of others. "You have certainly got to keep active and the best way is walking if you possibly can and getting out in the fresh air and helping people – being part of your village or area and looking after your neighbours."

Most Sundays she attends the early morning service at her village church with her husband, returning for breakfast and to check the slow roast lunch. Away, on holiday, the couple find alternative churches to continue their Sunday attendance.

She is a patron for Child Bereavement UK that helps train health professionals to better understand and meet the needs of grieving families. She is also President of the National Garden Scheme, having previously opened her garden to the public for over two decades. As a keen gardener, growing her own fruit and vegetables, and using them in many of her recipes, she is also an ambassador for the Royal Horticultural Society.

Her extraordinary life is detailed in her autobiography – Recipe for Success. Although she had no appetite for academic subjects at school she excelled at cookery which led to catering and institutional management at college. She later moved to France to study at the Cordon Bleu Cookery school while living in a Paris youth hostel. Back in Britain, after a series of exceptional breaks, she became cookery editor for a national home magazine. Widening horizons continued as Mary embraced new opportunities and success.

As she hung up her baker's apron for the BBC's final Bake Off she says: "What a privilege and honour it has been to be part of seven years of magic in a tent!"



Bake-Off favourite Mary Berry. Picture by Georgia Glynn Smith.

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# Film of hope follows youth worker's brain tumour shock

## ■ Continued from front page

on the script and provided training at the week-long film school that first brought the cast and crew of young people and adults together in February 2016.

Dan's twin brother, Ben Lawrence, a youth worker for Norwich Youth for Christ, was also instrumental in the project, editing and deputising as director when Dan was unable to be on set due to the illness.

Dan's wife Kim, a youth worker for Norwich Christian youth charity ENYP and also the 27 Beat Editor for the film, said: "It's been a good thing to focus on. During the treatments it was just something else to be doing and focusing on when everything else health-wise wasn't doing so good."

In May 2016, Dan was told that the brain tumour was continuing to grow and another cycle of chemotherapy began. In October 2016, he was told that the chemotherapy wasn't working and treatment would stop.

Describing how Dan took this news, Kim said: "We came out of that appointment and I said: 'how do you feel about it?' and Dan just looked at me and said: 'God's good'. And through everything, every time we get good or bad news, Dan is always



Emma Struthers and Joshua Gould in a scene from the film.

like: 'God's in control and God's good'. And that has always been the focus: God is still good and God still loves us."

When asked how Dan thought his own faith had helped him face the diagnosis, he said: "There's the crux of it. I get asked this question and I just sometimes don't know. I think that it all

comes down to how you take it on. I think there is something amazing about being in the Christian world, because there is a chance and a real hope."

'Looking to Eternity' premiered at Hollywood Cinema in Dereham in early November and is now available to buy on DVD for £10. Half of the proceeds from sales of the DVD will go to The Brain Tumour Charity at Dan's request.

The North Breckland YFC team pray that the film will be watched far and wide both by individuals and groups. The charity has produced free downloadable resources that groups can use alongside the film to discuss the issues that it raises.

Ang said: "We just want as many people as possible to see it, because we believe that God will touch people's lives with it. I think we've known that from the beginning and that's always been what is driving us."

You can purchase the Looking to Eternity DVD (self-classified as PG because of the difficult subjects tackled) and download the free resources from [www.northbrecklandyfc.org.uk/lte](http://www.northbrecklandyfc.org.uk/lte)

Dan died peacefully surrounded by his family on Monday November 21. His family are very thankful for all the prayers and support they have had on this journey.

# Claudia is a dancing queen

Gymnastics champion **Claudia Fragapane** has been wowing the nation on **Strictly Come Dancing** over the past few weeks.

**T**he Pocket Rocket puts her success down to dance partner AJ Pritchard, but also to her Christian faith.

Claudia's Twitter status reveals: "I can do ALL things through Christ who strengthens me" Philippians 4:13.

"I just want to go there, enjoy it and challenge myself," said Claudia who, at the age of 18, is the second youngest-ever contestant on the BBC hit show.

Based in the West Country, Claudia picked up an incredible four gold medals at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow in 2014, plus three successive silvers at the European Championships. And her success on the podium translated into a Young Sports Personality of the Year win.

She admits she prays before competing at gymnastics: "I do what all Christians do, I pray before I compete. I say: will you help me and guide me through everything? And really, I feel like my faith puts me out there a bit more."

At just 4'7, Claudia proudly wears the nickname Pocket Rocket and her partnership with AJ has been a hit with the audience and judges alike.

"In my gymnastics I've been doing the same floor routine for ages," said Claudia. "I only change it once every two years, so a different dance every week is going to be pretty crazy. Dancing in heels is also hard."

But she is keeping her feet on the ground – when AJ will let her that is

Claudia's family – she is the middle of five sisters – and a strong Christian faith, are her anchors.

"I go to church every Sunday I can," she says. "I like to spend time with my family, go out for meals and do shopping – just like any other girl."

But not every girl can claim gymnastic gold medals and Strictly success – so keep on dancing Claudia.



Claudia Fragapane and AJ Pritchard in action during Strictly Come Dancing. Picture by BBC.

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# Norfolk surgeon is an inspiration

The pioneering medical expertise of Norfolk-based surgeon **Prof Jerome Pereira** has inspired thousands across the world. **Mike Wiltshire** reports.

**T**he remarkable story of Professor Jerome Pereira, a leading cancer surgeon, began in South India many years before when, as a teenager, he and his family were heartbroken by the death of his 12-year-old cousin, Lyn, through cancer.

Jerome visited the hospital many times before little Lyn died. He determined then to study medicine – and, years later, became a professor of surgery and an international trainer of surgical consultants.

Today, the Norfolk-based surgeon's pioneering medical expertise and personal Christian faith has inspired thousands. His work has also included intensive research into leprosy which afflicts three million people who face permanent disability due to this disease, mostly in Asia and Africa.

Early in his career, Dr Pereira was himself inspired by another Christian surgeon, the late Dr Paul Brand, author of the well-known book, 'Ten Fingers for God.'

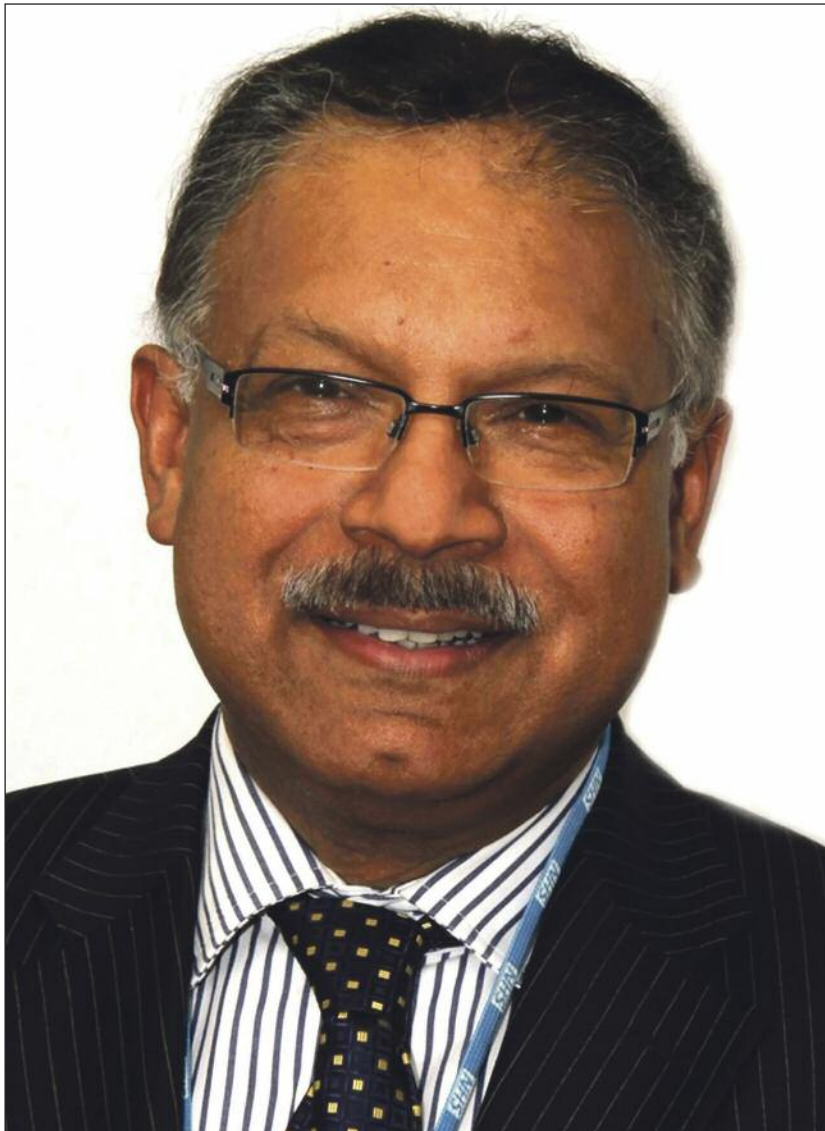
This famous English doctor was the first surgeon in the world to use reconstructive surgery to correct leprosy-caused deformities in the hands and feet. It was said of Dr Brand (who died in 2003 at the age of 89), that "he changed the world's perception of leprosy and leprosy sufferers."

His pioneering tendon transfer techniques are still used today to allow the hands and feet of leprosy patients to function properly. It was because of Paul Brand that Jerome – half his age – took up leprosy research. Dr Brand told him: "The Lord is bringing young men like you to carry the torch forward."

Dr Pereira's own research and surgical experience with leprosy patients has been foundational in his own career in helping to train other surgeons. He has a special interest in the outcomes of surgery and helped lead the national mastectomy and breast reconstruction programme. This was the first study in the world looking at the outcomes of breast cancer surgery and the largest patient outcomes study ever done in the UK.

As a consultant breast surgeon at James Paget University Hospitals in Great Yarmouth, he welcomes research which helps women make the right decisions about their treatment, with clearer advice from clinicians, thus improving quality of life after surgery.

Dr Pereira now leads advanced master-classes in online learning courses with live-link television seminars on breast surgery in 20 countries. This month has also seen the



Pioneering surgeon, Dr Jerome Pereira.

launch of a national feasibility study for the further training of NHS doctors.

He is a founder member of the Norwich School of Medicine and an honorary professor at the University of East Anglia.

Dr Pereira and his Irish-born wife, Mary, are both committed Christians whose faith that has helped them rise to many challenges in their service to others in the UK and overseas.

"My work is so absorbing and our life is very full – and we travel a lot. But we relax occasionally as avid walkers," says Dr Pereira, who came to faith in Christ through the personal testimony of his wife, Mary.

With memories of a strict Catholic education as a child, he admits he initially found Mary's new-found faith "rather strange at first." He also recalled several years of "irresponsible social life" as an ambitious young medic – a lifestyle that did not help his dream of becoming a successful surgeon in the US.

Nevertheless, Mary's vibrant faith impressed Jerome who admitted he "felt somewhat empty" despite all the eventual advantages of a successful medical career. So he began reading the Bible in spare moments – "and over a

period of six months, the words came alive to me, with the help of the Holy Spirit." He eventually made a personal commitment to faith in Christ and discovered a peace of heart he had not known before.

Jerome considered doing missionary medical work and made a costly decision to work for six years in the area of leprosy research. Today he "just stands back amazed" at the way God has helped him and Mary make the right career decisions and helped them persevere in their service to others. Mary, a former midwife, has a degree in psychology and is a trained Christian counsellor.

In the last 13 years, in addition to medical work, Jerome and Mary have helped to support training courses for more than 2,000 Christian ministers in tribal areas of India, Bhutan, Sikkim, Assam and Nepal, plus many summer camps for young people in the region.

Speaking recently at an inspirational dinner for Christian businessmen in Norwich, Dr Pereira urged his listeners to take seriously the claims of Christ. "Try to find God's plan for your life, he will definitely show you. In John's Gospel, Jesus, the Good Shepherd, promises us: My sheep hear my voice."

## Newspaper distributor wanted

The Good News for Norwich & Norfolk newspaper is looking for a new distribution co-ordinator to help the long-established newspaper reach as many readers as possible, four times a year.

■ The role involves maintaining the current established distribution network, which ensures that nearly 7,000 copies of each paper get promptly to churches, bookshop and libraries across greater Norwich and surrounding parts of Norfolk.

The quarterly distribution involves collecting the papers from the Archant Print Centre in Thorpe St Andrew, then sorting and delivering bundles to area contacts in and around greater Norwich.

### Each edition requires around 10 hours of work

■ A good knowledge of the city and the Christian community would be helpful.

■ You are also invited to attend our quarterly editorial meeting with the rest of the Good News team.

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■ The role is currently a voluntary one, but mileage and modest payment is available if required.

If you share our vision to ensure that good news stories about the Norwich and Norfolk Christian community reach as wide an audience as possible and would like to find out more or have a chat about the position, please contact editor Keith Morris on 07712 787762 or email [keith.morris@networknorwich.co.uk](mailto:keith.morris@networknorwich.co.uk) for an initial chat.

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# Choir's song of praise

Young people visiting loved ones in **Norwich** prison are the latest to benefit from the great work of the **Cringleford Singers** who have held hundreds of fund-raising concerts over the last 45 years, inspired by director **Margaret Smith**. **Mike Wiltshire** reports.

**C**harity Ormiston Families is the latest to benefit from the choir's amazing work, and one parent who uses young people's visits at Norwich Prison, said: "The support Ormiston that gave us during time spent with my son in Norwich was amazing. The experience of confronting all the sights and sounds of prison life was very daunting – and that's why Ormiston is literally a God-send."

Meanwhile, the inspiration behind the Cringleford Singers is choir director Margaret Smith, who began the group 45 years ago with just ten women. Today, the 40-strong choir presents 25 informal concerts a year, singing everything 'hummable' from classical jazz and folk songs to showtime numbers from the musicals, all supported by the Cringleford musicians.

They have raised around £45,000 for various groups and charities in Norwich, including the House of Genesis, a Christian home for the homeless at Thorpe St Andrew; Clare School, the specialist physical and sensory day-college; Whizz-Kidz, a group which transforms the lives of disabled children, helping them to become confident and independent young adults; Hearing Dogs for deaf people; and the Phab Club, whose motto is 'making more of life together' for children and adults with special needs.

Margaret Smith, who is also music director at St Andrew's church in Eaton, comes from a gifted family of musicians that goes back four generations – "my mum was a wonderful pianist, and our three children all play instruments," she said.

Margaret herself has run three choirs – "music is a passion with me - it's God-given." She also has wide experience in the secretarial and admin work in the business world, including the oil industry and music sectors,



Pictured above is director Margaret Smith at the piano and, top, the Cringleford Singers.

as well as in church life.

Margaret also manages to be chair of the trustees of Norwich Youth For Christ and a trustee of the Revelation Christian bookshop and café in Norwich which she describes as 'an oasis of peace in a bustling city.'

Married in 1967, Margaret and her husband, Dr Chris Smith, will celebrate their golden wedding next year. They met as teenagers in a large Bible class of 100 young people at Christ Church, New Malden, in south-west London. It was at this Bible class that Margaret and Chris became Christians.

Asked about her tireless motivation for service to others, Margaret says: "I just want people to know the reality of the love of Jesus – no matter who you are, or the problems you face, he can transform your life."

On Saturday, February 4, at St Andrew's Church, Eaton, Margaret is organising another

annual 'Singalong' with Miles Quick, a talented Christian musician who used to teach at Norwich School. The programme at 7.30pm will include Vivaldi's 'Gloria' and Roger Jones' 'Apostle', plus other items.

"Everyone is welcome – whether to sing, play an instrument or to be the audience. It's a free event, with a retiring offering for Norwich Youth For Christ," says Margaret.

The Cringleford Singers, who present a wide range of secular music, do not charge for their concerts, but invite donations for charity. The choir is always looking out for women "who love singing, can sight-read reasonably well and practise on Thursday evenings."

To contact Margaret Smith, call 01603 453010, or visit, [www.cringledorsingers.org.uk](http://www.cringledorsingers.org.uk)

Details about Ormiston Families is available at [www.ormiston.org](http://www.ormiston.org)

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YMCA enables people to develop their full potential in mind, body and spirit. Inspired by, and faithful to, our Christian values, we create supportive, inclusive and energising communities, where young people can truly belong, contribute and thrive.



# Ex-City star swaps pitch for a pulpit

Former Norwich City midfielder Philip Mulyrne, 38, has swapped the pitch for the pulpit as he was ordained as a deacon in the Catholic Dominican Order at a service at St Saviour's church in Dublin recently.

**B**r Philip was ordained by the Archbishop of Dublin, Diarmuid Martin, during a Mass and was joined by his family, friends and many Dominican brothers. It is expected that he will continue to be ordained to the priesthood sometime during the coming year.

Philip began his career at Manchester United alongside David Beckham, Nicky Butt and Paul Scholes but opportunities were limited and he only played a handful of first team games before joining Norwich City for £500,000 in March 1999 in the hope of gaining more first-team opportunities. He scored on his second appearance against Grimsby but a broken leg ruled him out for most of the next season.

In the 2001-02 season, Philip was a member of the Norwich team that reached the final of the Division One play-offs against Birmingham in Cardiff, but lost on penalties.

He was part of the City side that won promotion to the Premier League as Division One champions in 2004. Philip left the Canaries to join Cardiff City after more than 150 appearances for the club and ended his career at non-league King's Lynn. He also played international football 27 times for Northern Ireland.

After his retirement from football at the age of 31, Philip began training for the Roman Catholic



**Pictured left and above is Br Philip Mulyrne just after being vested at the service in Dublin. Pictures courtesy of the Irish Dominicans.**

Dominican friar at St Saviour's Priory in Dublin on Saturday October 29.

Talking about his decision to become a priest, Philip said: "One of the major reasons which attracted me to the religious life was to give oneself completely to God.

"To take Him as our example and, despite our weaknesses and our defects, to trust in Him that he will transform us by his grace and thus being transformed, to communicate the joy in knowing Him to everyone we meet.

"This to me is the ideal of the Dominican life and one of the major reasons that attracted me to the order."

priesthood. He studied at the Pontifical Irish College in Rome

and in September 2016, he made his profession to become a

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# Norfolk's 9000 boxes of joy

■ Volunteers across Norfolk for Christian charity Samaritan's Purse expect to send over 9,000 shoeboxes of gifts to children in need around the world in the run-up to Christmas.

Operation Christmas Child is the largest children's Christmas project of its kind in the world, and last year the UK sent an incredible 900,008 shoeboxes of gifts to children in need around the globe.

Samaritan's Purse has been running Operation Christmas Child (OCC) since 1993, and the impact on children's lives is immeasurable. Nick Cole, Director of Operation Christmas Child in the UK said: "There is little that brings us as much joy as seeing the smile on these children's faces. So often they have little or nothing. Receiving an unconditional gift, lovingly packed by a volunteer in the UK is a fantastic way to share the true meaning of Christmas with them."

Emma Fawcett – OCC Eastern Regional Manager said: "In Norfolk, the shoeboxes are processed at sites in Aylsham, Norwich and



Shoeboxes of gifts are delivered to children in a Syrian refugee camp in Northern Iraq.

Dereham, all staffed by volunteers. Norfolk is aiming to export a full lorry of boxes this year which will be around 9,000 shoebox gifts."

Collection points closed on November 18 for this year but more details are available at: [www.operationchristmaschild.org.uk](http://www.operationchristmaschild.org.uk)



Singing sisters, Adrienne and Fern Davis. Pictures by Photocillin.

# Sister act in a camper van

Sister act, **Adrienne and Fern Davis**, packed up their life, hopes and dreams, in a rusting camper van and hit the road for a huge faith adventure. **Sandie Shirley** reports.

**F**ive years on, Daughters of Davis, an acoustic soul and folk duo, are at the forefront of fame and success, and visited Thetford recently to share their hearts and voices as well as their mission to call a halt to media pressure.

At this year's Flourish - Liberty Church's annual women's conference - the sisters spoke about Not Playing the Game (also the title of their third album). Their message was loud and clear, spoken with a robust faith for a faithful God who sees them through the highs, lows and dangers of their on-going travels.

God sees humanity without the need for flawless perfection and idealism, so often portrayed in the media, explains Fern. "The lies we absorb can give us a skewed view of life," she adds.

The simple understanding – that God loves us as we are – is often central to the girls' popular rhythmic compositions.

The sisters have known the damaging effects of media pressure in their own lives and they are out to break down the lies and misconceptions using social media so others can find freedom too. Today they have the listening ear of a captive audience. Their hit albums have been aired on national secular and Christian radio and they have wowed audiences across the UK and Europe as well as performing with Peter Andre.

In 2011, their life of sacrifice and faith took off as they travelled the country and began writing on the road. Adrienne ended her occupational therapist job while Fern finished her art degree and sold her car; together they painted houses and did car boot sales – often in the rain – to

buy an old camper van.

"Friends and family thought we were crazy but I remember praying with Adrienne and saying 'if God wants it to happen then he will open the doors'," says Fern. Throughout their journey the girls will point to their Saviour's care and guidance. "It is never too late to do what is in your heart. If you follow your dreams we know God will provide, he has never left us - we have seen it first-hand," says Adrienne.

Performances, media interest and song writing have gained momentum as the doors have certainly swung wide but the journey has also been challenging. During snowy, wintry nights they have slept in layers of clothing to keep warm; survived on porridge, noodles and cheap tins of soup and at times they have busked to pay for the next meal. On one occasion their van – which has since been replaced - was broken into in the early hours of the morning as they slept. "But God was good - we saw the guy run off into the distance as we drove away," says Fern.

[www.daughtersofdavis.com](http://www.daughtersofdavis.com)



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