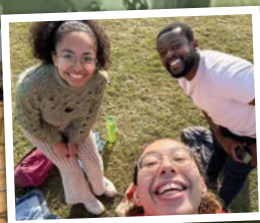




IGNiTE

SPARKING PASSION FOR THE GOSPEL ACROSS THE UK | SPRING 2025



FROM SATANISM TO CHRIST

One woman's story of her journey to freedom in Jesus

"We 'earn the right' to share our faith."

A new community hub bringing Jesus to the heart of the Wirral.

A Tale from the Well

The Bible slot.



WELCOME TO IGNITE

QR codes: *We have introduced 'QR codes' to Ignite to make it easier to access our website. Just open your mobile phone camera, point the camera at the QR code image, tap the link that appears on your mobile screen, follow any instructions which will take you to the Counties website.*

It has been a thrill to launch the Connect Evangelists Training programme in February. This programme aims to raise and train an army of evangelists, equipped and ready to serve in and through their local church. Read more on the behind-the-scenes on page 6.

God has blessed us with a team committed to serving the Lord in many ways. Read about Ian, who, though a Baptist minister, has joined us to serve behind the scenes

in the office (page 34). Rachel Mugford, currently serving as an evangelist's voice on our Trustees, writes to renew our joy through the eyes of the woman at the well on page 30.

Thank you for your prayers and financial support. Your partnership with us in the work bears fruit to the glory of God.

Martin Erwin, CEO

Making Jesus known: inspiring and equipping local churches

Counties is a Registered Charity No. 264278 and a Company limited by guarantee registered in England & Wales No. 1041761
Address: Counties, 30 Haynes Road, Westbury, Wiltshire BA13 3HD

Telephone: **01373 823 013** | Email: **office@countiesuk.org** | **countiesuk.org**


Thank you for your valued partnership. We are glad to make Ignite available free of charge. It costs approximately £10 per year to produce and distribute this newsletter to you. Every additional contribution will help us continue in our mission.

Editor: Rachel Rounds – communications@countiesuk.org | Design: Better Story (BetterStory.co.uk)




CONTENTS

6-9



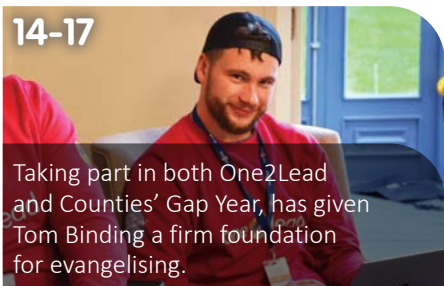
Counties CEO, Martin Erwin, has been busy making films for our new Connect Evangelists Training programme.

10-13




"We 'earn the right' to share our faith."
A new community hub emerging from an old library has brought Jesus to the heart of the Wirral.

14-17



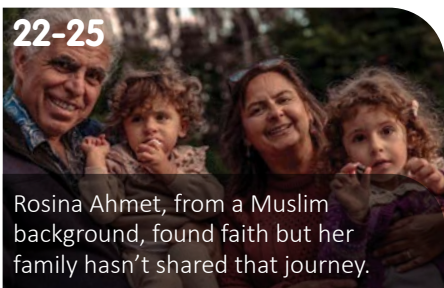
Taking part in both One2Lead and Counties' Gap Year, has given Tom Binding a firm foundation for evangelising.

18-21




From satanism to Christ – one woman's story of her journey to Jesus.

22-25




Rosina Ahmet, from a Muslim background, found faith but her family hasn't shared that journey.

26-29




M4 Training Weekend in Chester – Counties trainer, James Hyde, tells how God blessed them.

30-33



"A Tale from the Well." Rachel Mugford shares how the biblical story still has deep relevance.

34



Just a Minute with Counties New Admin Support Officer, Ian McManus

NEWS IN BRIEF

Millie Rumley goes to be with the Lord.

As some of you know, Jonathan and Heather Brain's daughter Millie was called home just before Christmas.

Jonathan shared:

"Our beloved daughter Millie has gone to heaven. Her strong faith in Christ we also share, and though we are sad, we shall see her again before too long."

Since Millie's diagnosis with cancer four years ago, Millie and the whole family have been a testimony to Christ through these most difficult of times. The family was able to care for Millie together at home for the last two and a half weeks.

In early January, a service was held at the



graveyard in Chippenham for family, close friends, and their church family.

Please continue to uphold the whole family in your prayers, including Jonathan and Heather, Nick and their two boys, Sammy and Ezra. Also, Isaac, Millie's brother, and his wife Rhoda.

Connect Conference 2025



We're thrilled that the Connect Conference 2025 has John McGinley as our guest speaker. This year's theme is Inspire, Equip, Engage, and it promises to be an impactful weekend of growth, learning, and connection.

"John is convinced that the renewing and reforming work that God is doing with his church today is actually a refounding on Jesus. In this conference

Reader's Letters

Dear Counties,

The lead article in Winter's Ignite, about Dave Jordon and how he found faith, was a story that illustrated how powerful prayer can be. But it also reminded me that everything happens in God's



time. And that's where faith can be a real challenge.

Dave's wife Nancy prayed for 35 years that he would know God. At home in their study Dave was surrounded by Bibles and books about Christianity. He made cups of tea for those attending his wife's house group, but he didn't see any of it related to him.

I often pray and think nothing happens. Does God not hear?

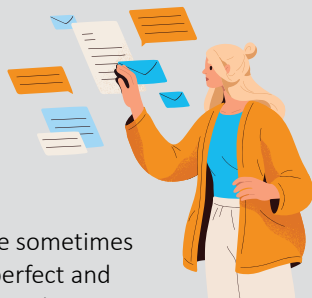
But this story reminded me that maybe sometimes God's plan is perfect and our desire to see things happen in 'our time' might not be God's timing.

But although He doesn't need reminding, this shouldn't stop me ever asking in faith and looking for opportunities to share His story.

As someone who has a family where no one is a believer and who has also prayed for decades for that to change it was moving to read how Dave committed his life to following Jesus.

Richard, Gloucestershire

We love hearing from you. So, if you would like to comment on an article in Ignite or Counties' work, please email: communications@countiesuk.org



we will journey through John's gospel, engaging with passages that help us to explore how God does this in our personal lives and with his church."

Waitlist

Get notified by email
when conference
booking is available:



counties
CONNECT+

inspire | equip | engage

Connect Conference 2025

'Inspire, Equip, Engage'

24-26 October 2025

Staverton Park Hotel & Golf Club,
Daventry, NN11 6JT

COUNTIES CEO, MARTIN ERWIN, HAS BEEN BUSY MAKING FILMS FOR OUR NEW CONNECT EVANGELISTS TRAINING PROGRAMME

He shares the inspiring reason behind all the hard work.



Bob Telford (left) and James Hyde

Our new training programme is up and running, but it was a dull, dark day in December, when I drove down to somewhere near Bristol, to meet up with James Hyde, Counties Project manager and Allison Smith, our Training Administrator. We were excited as this was a day we had been working hard to get ready for – the first day of filming our new Connect Evangelists Training programme.

Nick, our videographer from Filma king, had set up for the first set of talks, and we were ready to roll.

For 125 years Counties has trained evangelists, and the impact of that work will only truly be told in eternity when we gather around the Throne of God in worship with those who are there. Many will be there because of a Counties evangelist. They will be there because you prayed for the workers and supported the work faithfully.

However, the world we inhabited in the early 20th century is very different from the one we live in today. Back in the 1950's,

an evangelist putting a tent up on the edge of the village, or on the housing estate, was a big deal. People turned up just to see what was happening. Tents were jammed full, meetings were powerful, choirs sang well known songs, evangelists preached familiar texts, people were saved, and churches were planted.

The needs today are greater than ever. People are certainly spiritually hungry and thirsty, but the traditional relationship with the church is broken. Most people grow up with no knowledge of the God of the Bible, and so their journey of faith must begin much further back.

The needs of the local church therefore are different. Whilst many

Bible Colleges may continue to prepare teachers and pastors, we believe that the local church needs to raise up evangelists.

People are certainly spiritually hungry and thirsty, but the traditional relationship with the church is broken.

Ordinary men and women who are called by God to work where they are – in their community, at their workplace, through their own local church. Church leaders will need to look to appoint evangelists to their leadership vacancies or recognise their 'evangelist' not just their 'pastor!'





So back to that large house, on a dark December morning in 2024. Why were we there, what were we doing? The answer is simple. Paul writes in Ephesians 4: 11 & 12 *"Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do*

his work and build up the church, the body of Christ."

The vision for this new programme was simple. The church needs all the gifts to function and grow, but in a season of decline and with ever growing masses of people lost without Christ and without hope in this world, we need to equip an army of evangelists. So there in Bristol, we began the job

of producing materials for a new programme.

Over the next few months, evangelists and speakers from different age groups, with vast experience working with different cultures and generations, will share their best material, recorded on video, and made available as part of a new training approach.

Connect Evangelists Training programme will involve a blended approach to learning –

- Engaging with the video content online, learning the Gospel and how to share it.
- Gathering on Zoom and in person to sharpen our edge.
- Mentoring, thereby connecting the trainee evangelists with their church leaders to access and apply the material together locally.
- Opportunity to join mission in the UK and elsewhere to share the Gospel of Christ.

All six modules – Gospel, Evangelist, Teamwork, Mission Field, Church and The Main Thing – are being filmed on a month-by-month basis, with the first participants having begun the programme in February. At the time of writing, we have over 40 people committed to train as evangelists.

That first module being filmed in December saw Bob Telford come to share the heart of the Gospel – what is it and why does it matter? Alistair Hornal, a friend and former Counties evangelist, explored the Kingdom call to follow Jesus, and explored how the Gospel motivated him personally.

It was great for James Hyde to be able to sit down with Tim and Katrina Cracknell and unpack what it means to grow a church that attracts people who know nothing about church, whilst Mark and Jo Jones discuss the joys of growing a church from the ground up, without a building to call home, and using a missional approach. I had the joy of kicking the whole programme off by reminding us that what we are really doing is joining God in His mission.

Mission is the very heart of God, and he invites us to join Him in it. Will you join us in pursuing the mission of God?

How to participate.

1. Talk to your leaders about this programme.
2. Enquire about the course.
3. Apply to join it.
4. Help fund the programme, helping us to train an army of evangelists.

To find out more about the **Connect Evangelist Training** Programme visit:



"WE 'EARN THE RIGHT' TO SHARE OUR FAITH."

A new community hub emerging from a previously held council library, has brought Jesus to the heart of the Wirral.



When Wirral council said it was selling off their local library, Pioneer People Wirral, (Mark Johnston) put a bid in to operate the building as a community space. Dawn Ritchie and her husband, Pete – who are supported by Counties Connector Andy Dykes – jumped at the chance to take their church into the community.

"We decided right at the beginning that we would show love and friendship to people and, if you like, 'earn the right' to share our faith."

When Dawn and Pete, the Pastors of Emmanuel Church in Pensby, along with Dawn's brother-in-law Mark Johnston,

who works for the charity Pioneer People Wirral, heard the Council was getting rid of Pensby Library, they decided to submit a business plan for a new community hub.

The council accepted it. They now run the Hope Coffee Shop in Pensby Library, which consists of a smaller library section, a vintage emporium, and a coffee shop. Dawn calls it: *"The face of the church outside the walls of the church, serving our community."*

"Some of the original volunteer staff from the library have stayed with us. We are open three days a week. We have one paid member of staff, who is our cook. The other 29 people are all volunteers. They are a mixture of Christians and non-Christians."

"Sometimes we share our faith, but sometimes gospel opportunities come from people themselves: 'Why are you here?' 'Why are you doing this?' It's been a very natural way to share who we are and why we want to love and serve our community."

Dawn recalls how, on a day when the library was closed, a man was due to come to service the window shutters.

She had to open especially, as the man had driven for two and a half hours to do the job.

"He came in and asked what we were doing. When I said we were Christians, he raised his eyebrows, and he said: 'I've been thinking about Jesus recently. None of my family or friends are Christians, but I downloaded 'The Chosen' film, and I got part way through, and I knew that this was who I believed Jesus is.'"

Dawn says it was such a blessing to talk through faith and realise that this man really had made a commitment. The gentleman also told Dawn he had prayed the day before that God would send someone to him who

would encourage him in his search for Jesus. Dawn has become friends with him over WhatsApp and talks to him about the Lord.

"He's been telling me he's been witnessing to his parents and friends. It's lovely. It's been such a blessing and an encouragement."

The library has also been involved with a lot of charity work. The profits from the coffee and vintage emporium go to different charities, mostly through Pioneer People Wirral who support needs at home and abroad, including a community engineering workshop 'Shedheads' and sending 40 lorry containers out to The Gambia and Albania amongst others.





For Dawn, it is a joy also to be able to sell crafts to support Living Water Adopt-a-Child, (a part of which is their charity, ‘The Enid Project,’ which supports special needs children in Guatemala).

The library also held a fundraiser for Ukraine, during which they cycled (on static bikes) the distance to Ukraine over three days. The library cook is Ukrainian, and there are many Ukrainians in the area, so it brought the whole community together.

When they were a mile off the equivalent of the Ukrainian border, everyone got off their bikes and let the Ukrainian refugees ride the last part.

“They cycled over the border, and it was emotional. We raised over £4000 for several charities in Ukraine.”

“We are doing so many other things, and it’s drawing the community together. It’s being the hands and feet of Jesus. Also, we are not afraid to share our faith, but we are doing it in a natural way.”

Dawn goes on to tell the story of a lady who offered to be a volunteer who arrived early for her shift. Dawn says she was distraught.

“She said she had found a mass in her stomach, and she was a nurse, so she said she knew it was bad. So, I said to her: ‘I don’t know if you have faith, but I do. May I pray with you?’ And she reached across the table and grabbed both my hands and said: ‘Yes, please.”

Dawn kept in touch with the lady throughout the journey of her illness. She was told the mass probably was cancer, but further tests revealed it wasn’t – which was the first big breakthrough. She then had to go for a serious operation on the mass.

A few weeks later, the lady came into the library and fell into Dawn’s arms, crying. She said she had been given the ‘all-clear’ and told to ‘go and get on with her life.’

“Her words were, ‘I feel like I’ve been born again.’ I need to unpick that with her, but we are moving in the right direction,” Dawn adds.

Then Dawn was sitting with an older lady who had come in with her grandson, and they started talking about Christianity.

“The minute we started talking, I saw her wince, and she said: ‘I am sorry, but all I can think of when someone starts talking about religion is my dad taking his belt off to us when we did anything wrong.’

“It’s at times like this you suddenly realise what hurt there is in people’s background, and I was able to just gently say: ‘I am so sorry about that. Your dad thought he was being religious but let me tell you this – that’s not my Jesus.’ And she looked at me

and said: 'So what is?' And I was able to share a little bit about what Jesus means to me. I encouraged her to watch 'The Chosen' and see how Jesus interacts with people. That was just another lovely experience."

But Dawn and the other Christian volunteers can be witnesses to more than just the customers; they are also evangelising the staff by the way they live and interact with each other.

One of the volunteers, who isn't a Christian, has two disabled children. She received a call to say one of them was ill. Dawn and quite a few volunteers were in the kitchen with her, and Dawn asked her if she and another Christian volunteer could pray with her before she left. She prayed out loud in front of all the volunteers as if it were normal to do in the situation.

"It just felt so natural. It didn't feel forced or weird. It felt like: 'This is the kind of thing we do'. It is just drip-feeding our faith and who we are into people who wouldn't walk into a church."

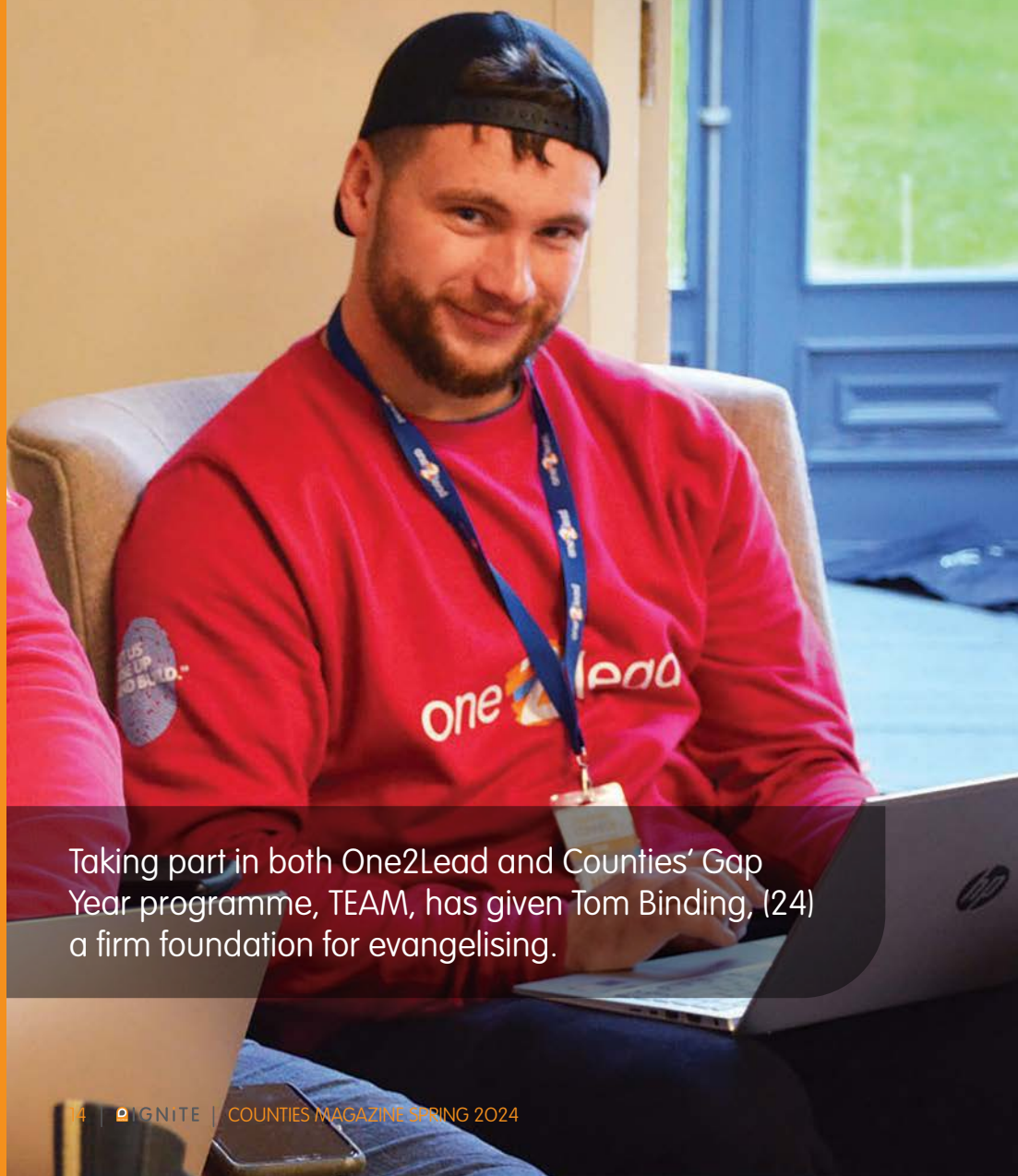
"We have great banter. There is great care. It's very tiring and hard work, but it's so worth it, and I would encourage any other church that can do; to do it. It's the most amazing thing we've ever been involved in as a church."



Find out how
Counties can
**help your
church grow
and develop**



ONE2LEAD AND TEAM



Taking part in both One2Lead and Counties' Gap Year programme, TEAM, has given Tom Binding, (24) a firm foundation for evangelising.

Tom, tell Ignite how you became a Christian.

I have been going to Dunvant Christian Fellowship all my life. I used to attend the mid-week club called I-Club which was run by Counties Evangelist, Phil Davies. I also listened to many materials produced for kids by Counties Evangelist, John Hardwick.

I used to read a Christian magazine called Topz. I thought it was cool because it was spelled with a 'Z' – and a little section at the end asked if you wanted to say a prayer to be friends with Jesus. So, I said the prayer with my mum when I was about five or six years old. Being brought up in that kind of environment helped me make the decision.

Tell us about One2Lead.

I first went to the one in Chepstow when I was 16. The thing I particularly liked was that it made it clear that you don't have to be a future leader to come on One2Lead; it's for everyone. I enjoyed the teaching and practicality of it. I loved spending time with other Christians of my age who wanted to serve. I felt a calling to go into church ministry work. I graduated from the initial course; I stayed on to explore some topics in further depth – which One2Lead offers. In 2019 I was asked to be a leader on the One2Lead course.

How did you find making the switch from being a student to a teacher?

To ensure I was doing the right thing, I took a year's break before returning



as a leader. Because I knew the course and had been on One2Lead so many times, it was easy to make that switch and come alongside young people to chat about things.

What are the biggest difficulties that young people tell you they are facing?

I think how they make that decision about starting to serve and how they can make a difference in their local church, even though they are young. I know I am only 24 years old, but I would hate to be in their position now in schools. They are exposed to so much, and it can seem at times that the world is taking over. I know young people struggling with social

I know now young people struggling with social media is a cliché, but its hold is huge.



One2Lead group photo

media is a cliché, but its hold is huge, and young people want to be like the people they see on there. So, we get a lot of questions about how to ‘join in’ but ‘not join in’.

What kind of answers do you and One2Lead give young people?

One piece of advice I do give—and which I did—is to get alongside someone a little bit older in their church and try

to have one-to-one chats with them, spend evenings with them, and hold yourself accountable to them. Just find that one mentor/friend in your church that you can turn to and be completely honest with them. Get to a point where you can say: *“Look, I am struggling, and I need some help.”*

Find that young person, find that friend who you can go to who will help you, support you, and strengthen you through tough times.

What else have you learned as a leader at One2Lead?

I have learned that sometimes the best thing to say is ‘nothing’. When I led discussion groups before, I was so focused on telling the students: *“You haven’t got the right answers down, etc.”* and: *“This is what I think.”* But it didn’t give them a chance to speak. And I realised I needed to listen more.



Meal time at One2Lead



Particularly when working with younger people, we do give advice, but we also need to get alongside them.

You also spent a gap year on TEAM (now FirstServe UK) – how did that go?

Before TEAM, I wouldn't have done half the stuff I am doing now. I spent four weeks training on biblical overview, evangelism, and personal discipleship at Tilsley Bible College, Motherwell. Then, I spent much of my time with Counties Evangelist Tim Cracknell. He put me into situations where I was pushed out of my comfort zone: I led discussion groups, I helped out with the worship team and youth work. Tim showed me how to run a church! He showed me the 'ins and outs' of how to deal with issues like conflict within a church. He gave me lots of practical tips.

Find out more
about our **youth
development**
programmes



FROM SATANISM TO CHRIST



Deanne Dennis (31) now goes to Christ's Forgiveness Ministries in Barking – where Counties Evangelist, Charles Addoco is an Elder.

She tells Ignite how Jesus set her free.

Deanne Dennis's testimony is the kind of story that you don't hear very often: it's a powerful reminder of God's promise never to let go and save us from the jaws of hell; but it's also a story of how many non-Christians can get lost in the power of Satan's grip when they are left alone searching for answers.

Deanne was not brought up in a Christian home although her mum *"kind of believed in God"* and her dad was *"sort of spiritual"* but she had no real godly influences in her life. She says her parents' divorce at a young age affected her confidence and she was bullied at school. This left her feeling very alone:

"In high school I was very isolated. I had very low self-esteem and didn't like myself very much which I think came from the divorce and feeling my parents weren't always there for me. And I became very vulnerable to the enemy and that is when my journey down the wrong path began."



Deanne when she was younger and poorly (left).

Deanne looked and felt sick: *"I looked like a ghost and was so skinny"* but the doctors couldn't find out what was wrong with her even though she ate all the time.

During high school, Deanne ended up: *"Falling into Satanism"*. She found a satanic website and it said: *"If you don't belong somewhere, you have found your home."* Deanne still isn't sure how she found the website, but it pulled her in because she felt so isolated and lonely:

"I became immediately fascinated by it and everything it was saying was a perversion of Christianity. There was all

this emphasis on 'you are God' and 'you should be in your own power.'"

Deanne thinks this is why she stayed sick, and people were repelled from her, but this made her feel even more powerful and that she had found her home. At university, however, she found a YouTuber called the 'Vigilant Christian' who was debunking satanic beliefs, and she was very curious about what he had to say.

Deanne Dennis's testimony is the kind of story that you don't hear very often

"I have always been a truth-seeker and a lot of what this guy had to say seemed real to me. Based on his own experiences, however, he did warn people that 'getting out' was dangerous because demons don't want to let you go. So, I really did feel at this moment that it was God trying to help me out of it."

"I was watching this YouTuber on my phone and suddenly the screen went all black and white, static-like – like old televisions used to do. I felt freezing cold and boiling hot at the same time. Then I heard a satanic voice screaming at me 'STOP!'"

It was at this point that "frightening spiritual attacks and experiences" started to happen to Deanne which prevented her from leaving satanism as she was so scared of what might happen to her.

"I would be in the shower, and I would feel like I was being watched. I could suddenly see a man

standing on the other side of the shower glass for a split second and then he would disappear.

"It began happening all the time and I was terrified. I would also have visions where I would see scary things. I would feel like someone was behind me all the time. But when I pulled back from the Christian stuff, these things would stop."

But this made Deanne realise that she should be going more in the direction of Christianity, and she started to watch more and more of these videos.

It was then that describes the scariest moment of her life, which even now she struggles to explain.

"I was watching this YouTuber on my phone and suddenly the screen went all black and white, static-like – like old televisions used to do. I felt freezing cold and boiling hot at the same time. Then I heard a satanic voice screaming at me 'STOP'. And I felt this draft from the tip of my toes to my head and it was over.

"It probably lasted five seconds but it felt like a lifetime. And I was so

scared to even touch my phone. I didn't know what to do. I didn't have any Christian friends or support network.

"After that I bought a Bible and a cross necklace, but I was doing it out of fear, not because I was searching for God. I wore the cross day and night – not because it meant anything to me but because I was terrified that if I took it off something dreadful would happen to me. That's why I think I didn't have any positive experience of God at that time."

Eventually she got a great job travelling the world as a freelance marketer. And it was here that she really got into New Age spiritualism. She believed she was a 'light worker' but really, she was still trapped in darkness.

During that time Deanne's sister became a Christian





and sent her Bible verses and tried to talk to her about Jesus but Deanne didn't want to know because she was trapped in New Ageism. She found the Bible 'hateful' towards people – including gay people – as Deanne was attracted to women at the time. And she refused to believe organised religion had any answers.

She was still practicing reiki, crystals, tarot cards and other New Age practices and she felt great. She was making money, seeing the world and meeting new people but in her heart, she felt very lost and alone.

The turning point came in Italy in May. She had lost her job, she was trying to cling on to the life she had, hoping to regain it.

It was there she met a man whose church she now attends. Eventually, the conversation turned to God and although she told him: *"I will never become a Christian,"* she still had many questions and rather than get into an argument with Deanne, this man returned all the queries with grace, patience and kindness.

"Just the way he acted, that was enough of a testimony to make me think: 'I want some of what he's having.'"

When Deanne got back to the UK in June last year, she asked her sister if she could go to church with her.

"I was only saying this because I'd reached a point where I was so desperate at this

point, I thought: 'I have nothing to lose.'"

Deanne went to church for the first time and the pastor was saying things that were so specific to her situation that she felt he was talking directly to her.


"It was like at stab in my heart. God was speaking through him. It hit me like a tonne of bricks and the flood gates opened, and I just couldn't stop crying. All the years of pain came out and that was the moment I became a Christian because I finally found rest."

"It was like at stab in my heart. God was speaking through him. It hit me like a tonne of bricks"

Deanne has now been baptised and: *"it has been the most incredible experience that I can't describe. The way my life has been transformed. Everything I lost – my job, my friendships, my relationship with my sister – God has restored. Praise Him."*

FINDING FAITH

Rosina Ahmet, from a Muslim background, found faith after striking up a friendship with Counties Evangelists Rachel and Andy Mugford, but her family hasn't shared that journey.



*Rosina with her husband
and grandchildren*

Ignite's Editor, Rachel Rounds's husband isn't a Christian and they talk candidly about the struggles of being married to a non-Christian.

Rosina is half Scottish and half Pakistani. She lived in Pakistan for five years as a child and came to the UK when she was ten. For many Pakistanis, Islam is a way of life and not just a religion, and her father was a committed Muslim, although Rosina was not.

When they returned here, Rosina began attending Brownies where she learned about Jesus. But when she told her father what she'd learned, he told her she couldn't go to Brownies again because Muslims don't believe in Jesus.

"I just vividly remember that because I hadn't heard the name of Jesus before then. In school assemblies, we used to sing hymns, but I used to miss out the word 'Jesus' because my dad said we didn't believe in Him. Growing up, I didn't think much more about it."

This all changed when Rosina met Rachel Mugford. They were both National Childbirth Trust (NCT) representatives. At a meeting, Rosina discovered her family was moving into a house on the same road as Rachel and Andy in South Woodford in East London.

"I was at a crossroads where I wanted God in my life, but I didn't know whether I wanted to go down the Islam route or the Christian route."

But God had His hand on Rosina at that time even if she didn't know it.

"Looking back, moving into that house on the same street as Rachel and Andy was a miracle. Back in the Eighties, I wasn't working because I was looking after our two young daughters. We had already looked at 50 houses and, on that day, we'd seen five."

But God had His hand on Rosina at that time even if she didn't know it.

"This last house was well over our budget, and we told the estate agent there was no point going as we couldn't afford it. However, the estate agent assured us that the residents had already found where they wanted to move to and were open to offers."

"We really loved the house, and the owner said: 'We really want you to have it. We really want it to go to a family.' And so, he asked us what we could afford, and when we told him, he just shook our hands. That was that."

Rachel invited Rosina to a mother and toddler group and later a group called 'Word for Women'. Finally, Rosina started attending church and three years later she gave her life to Christ. The scripture that shouted out to her was from Romans 3:23-24:

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." (NIV)

"In Islam, there are lots of hoops you must jump through: you must pray five times a day, you must do this, do that. So, when that was preached, I thought: 'Oh my goodness, I don't have to do anything. God just loves me, and I must accept Christ.'"

Rosina says her husband has always been supportive of her faith and has never been antagonistic, but he isn't *'showing any signs'* of being interested.

Rosina's father had passed away by the time she became a Christian, but her husband and children aren't believers. Her daughters stopped going to church at a younger age.

Rosina says her husband has always been supportive of her faith and has never been antagonistic, but he isn't *'showing any signs'* of being interested.

Up until this point in the interview, I hadn't known this about Rosina and, having been married to a non-Christian for 13 years, I told her that's exactly how things stand in our home.

From that moment we shared experiences which I am sure are common and heart-breaking for many Christians who find themselves in this position.

"Despite being happily married to a lovely man who loves me and does everything to make my life easy, I get to the stage that I feel, to a degree, I am living two parallel lives. One with my church family and the other with Ergin my husband.

"It is a shame because when our children were younger and attending church, he would happily come to some events and even help at the church BBQs. I really hope that one day we can sit and pray together and have deep conversations about what Christ has done in my life."

Rosina and her husband are now moving from their home of thirty years and are busy packing up all their belongings which she says has made her feel that she needs to pray even more about the situation with her husband.

"I am praying with people at church, but it's him I need to be praying with."

As someone who also has a non-Christian husband, I completely understand Rosina's struggles. I understand her loneliness at not being able to share a huge part of yourself with your own husband.

Rosina is right that you end up feeling that you are living *'parallel lives'* and envy those Christian couples who have the joy of praying together and sharing Jesus in their lives together.

I do, however, remember, after one difficult argument about faith, going upstairs and crying. But I really felt God say to me: *"Rachel, it's MY job to save him, not yours."* As Rosina says we can only be *'shining lights'* however hard that may be at times.

I do also cling to the verse in 1 Corinthians 7:12

"And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him.

For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband."

We both agree that we must be on guard against the spiritual battles that can exist as the devil uses our situation to bring us down. Rosina says:

"As Christians, we need to protect ourselves and our families under the blood of Christ and really rebuke the devil because he looks for every single crack. And he just seeps in so quickly.

"I know that instead of getting angry about things I need to pray for God's peace in it. And I have ended up doing that – just asking the Lord for His peace."

As women of a certain age, it's also often hard to keep our emotions under control,

particularly the words we say in the heat of the moment. But Rosina reminded me of what the Bible has to say about the power of the tongue and the spiritual battle we face.

"We must pray into the breaking of bondage – because non-Christians are in bondage. We must pray that the power of the Holy Spirit will release them. But again, that's not our job, that's God's job."

Her words have been a real blessing to me, and I am praying for God's peace and for peace in the lives of other Christians who are married to non-Christians. They are ultimately in His hands – our job is to remain faithful to Him and be that 'shining light'.

Rosina with her two daughters and granddaughters
.....



M4 TRAINING WEEKEND IN CHESTER

Counties M4 trainer, James Hyde, tells Ignite how God blessed the weekend.

Many of you will be familiar with M4 which is a church planting process designed to help Christians who are called by God to start new churches. It's specifically designed to be team focused so that whole church groups can join – and it's not just left to a couple of church leaders to become responsible for planting a new church without the back-up and support of the whole church.

M4 began in 2007 when a group of church planters and leaders from Norway came together to pray, talk and explore how they could develop a church planting process that trained not only the church planter but also the whole team.

Since 2009, M4 Europe has helped initiate

1. over 300 church plants
2. planting movements in 17 nations



It is:

1. Open to all denominations / streams. Not 'owned' by anyone.
2. A collaboration of experienced church planters in the UK, investing in people who are pursuing the mission of God with a vision to begin new local churches
3. M4 UK and Ireland is led by Luiz Cardoso, Regional Director in



"We're delighted to have brought this successful training process to the UK and Ireland.

We believe that church planting is God's initiative and that it's Christ himself who builds His church.

Therefore, the authority of the Bible is essential for the content and message of the M4 Process.

We want to see a multiplying movement of missional churches, leaders with a Kingdom mentality that seek relationships first and are open to changes and improvement when they walk into the future together with God and His church."

Martin Erwin CEO



collaboration with Martin Erwin (CEO, Counties UK evangelism network); John Townley (National Leader of Free Methodist Church UK and Ireland); with input and expertise from M4 Europe Church Planting Movement

It was such a blessing to be in Chester leading M4's training programme. About 30 delegates including trainee facilitators, coaches, assessors and observers attended from Barnsley, Bradford, Deeside and Chemnitz in Germany (via Zoom).

"Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other." Psalm 85:10

Keith Cooper – who was called with his wife Rachel – to plant a Newfrontiers church in Chester, gave his message from Psalm 85:10. He explained how this verse points straight to Jesus. He went on to



explain how we are privileged to share this ancient message with people today. But it can often be a struggle. Keith asked us the very pertinent question of how we keep going?

He shared how it's important that as church planters we are not defined by this, but receive our love and security from Christ.

Luiz Cardoso, M4 UK & Ireland Regional Director's message, was taken from Philippians 3:10-14

"I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and

straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

He focused on four areas:

1. Relationships
2. Healthy life
3. Seek Jesus
4. Keep your joy.

His message was one which we all need to hear and take to heart during our daily lives, as we often get lost in doing 'God's work' at the expense of our own health:

No success in planting is worth destroying your family.

How is your sleep pattern?

Do you check in with your mental health regularly?

Invest in Christ's presence.
Laugh more!



The team exercises were run by me (Regional Coaching coordinator) and my wife Debbie (Regional Facilitation coordinator).

Since Counties Planting Network started in 2019, Debbie and I have helped to launch 18 planting teams through the M4 Team process.

The delegates did an exercise: "This event will be successful if..." and at the end of the day, they said that we had met their expectations as you can see from the picture:



Understanding your mission field worksheet:

- Planting team values: Unity in diversity; inspiring vision and strategy; resolve conflict quickly, openly and fairly
- Developing your planting timeline: sorting your tasks
- 4 I's exercise: What are the *issues* we talked about today? What have been my *insights*? What are the *ideas* we generated? What are my *intentions*?



Find out more about the **M4 programme**





A TALE FROM THE WELL

Rachel Mugford shares how the biblical story still has deep relevance for our lives today.

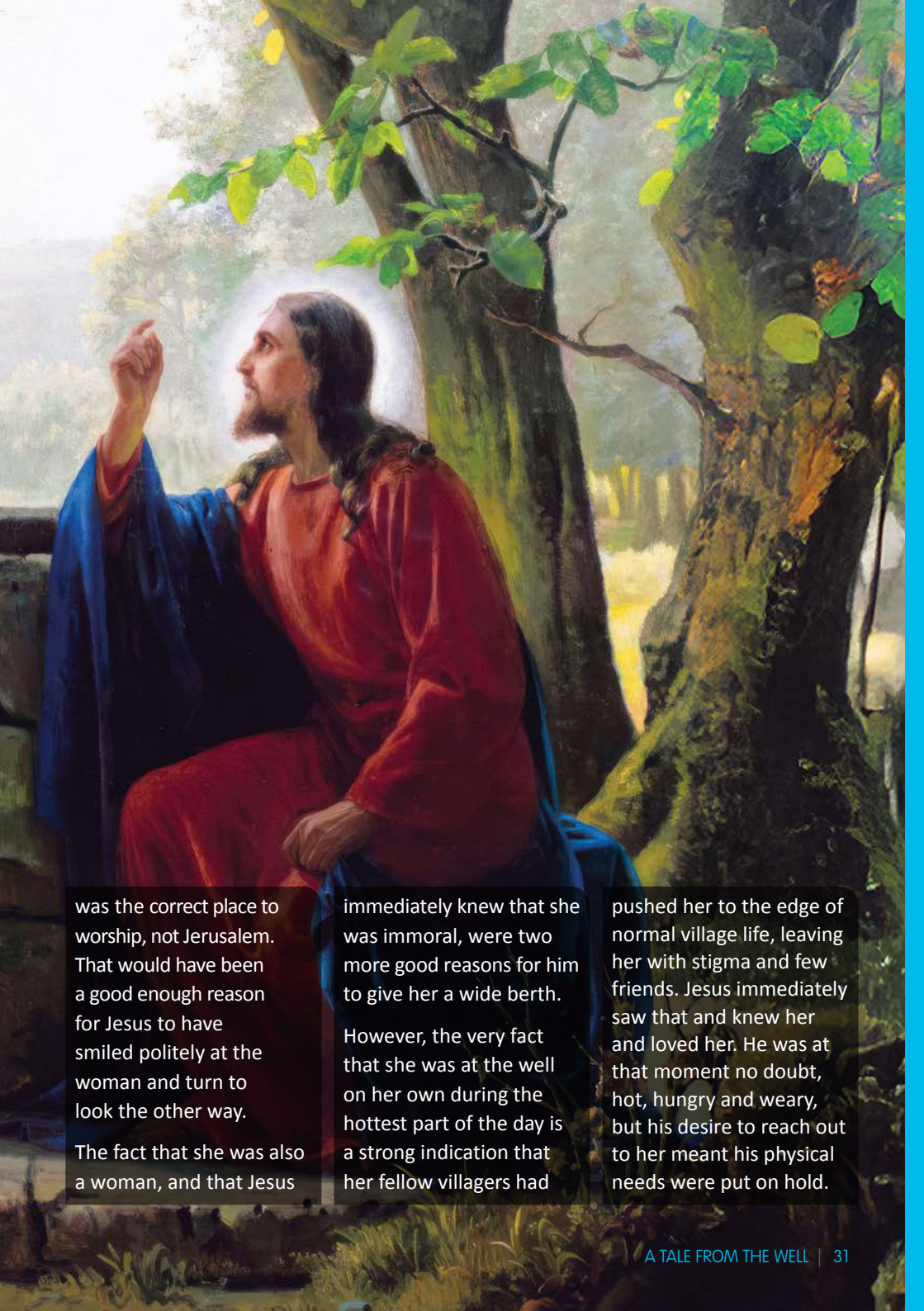
John chapter 4: 1-42 tells the story of a most amazing encounter between Jesus and someone who has no idea who he is, the Samaritan woman. There are layers of truth in this story and, as it progresses, the encounter turns out to be transformational for this individual!

I love this story – it's about a woman! That's where the similarity between her and me ends, but it gives us such insight into the God/man she met that day at the well.

The Samaritans came to be despised by the Jews following intermarriage

with the Assyrians after they invaded the northern kingdom of Israel hundreds of years before and the resulting corruption of Jewish beliefs.

The Samaritans only believed in the first five books of the Bible and that Mount Gerizim



was the correct place to worship, not Jerusalem. That would have been a good enough reason for Jesus to have smiled politely at the woman and turn to look the other way.

The fact that she was also a woman, and that Jesus

immediately knew that she was immoral, were two more good reasons for him to give her a wide berth.

However, the very fact that she was at the well on her own during the hottest part of the day is a strong indication that her fellow villagers had

pushed her to the edge of normal village life, leaving her with stigma and few friends. Jesus immediately saw that and knew her and loved her. He was at that moment no doubt, hot, hungry and weary, but his desire to reach out to her meant his physical needs were put on hold.



Jesus and the Samaritan Woman at the Well

I was recently looking at this passage with a young mum who asked: *“Why didn’t Jesus come out and say who he was and tell her what he could do for her straight away?”* Good question.

However, if Jesus had jumped in with what he knew about her life as an intro to building trust that might well have been the end of that! Instead, he takes the dear lady on a conversational journey using a brilliant analogy to help her gradually process that the person engaging with her is turning out to be someone rather special.

He may even be talking about more than the water at the bottom of the well! At face value, life-giving water that takes away thirst forever and bubbles up inside to eternal life sounds perfect!

The dear lady wanted it – she and Jesus were out in the midday sun after all! Then Jesus dropped his verbal bomb,

“The fact is you have had five husbands and the man you now have is not your husband”.

Her heart must have sunk, and shame and utter confusion must have threatened to overwhelm

her. At this point wouldn’t it be great if we had audio and visual coverage of this encounter? Then we could hear the tone of Jesus voice and see his eyes fixed on her with unwavering love and acceptance. We could begin to understand why she didn’t drop her earthenware jar and run. In the nicest possible way, she was hooked!

By this stage in the conversation’s journey she calls Jesus a prophet and goes on to talk about where Samaritans and Jews worship. This change of subject could be seen as a diversion from the spotlight being shone on her personal life.

Jesus goes with it and his insight and wisdom in his reply to this lady, though predictable to us, would have been revolutionary to her. He explains that a time is dawning when worship would not be about the place, but about the state of peoples’ hearts: God seeks people who will worship him in the Spirit and in truth.

The Samaritan woman is moving on in her thinking

and says: “I know Messiah is coming...”. Jesus has brought her to the exact moment in time and place where he can say to her: *“I, the one speaking to you – I am he.”*

What a time for the disciples to return and find Jesus in conversation with a Samaritan woman! She may have sensed these men weren’t quite on the same page as their Master and decides now is the right time for her to leave her water jar behind and head back into the village. Did she turn and yell as she went, *“Don’t go!”* And was there already a change in her countenance, an easing of the stress lines on her face? Was light beginning to dance in her eyes?

Something had changed about her, and it was enough to convince her fellow villagers to go back to the well with her.

This entrancing passage encourages and challenges us in so many ways. Here are just three that I found helpful. One is in my dealings with people, whether they are people I already know or more

especially don’t know. Can I ever hope to have the Jesus’ incisiveness in conversations? Maybe not. However, I can ask for God’s wisdom and the Spirit’s discernment in looking for common ground with folk who are not yet believers. We can ask the Lord Jesus for an opening into a person’s life which may enable us to share some golden nugget of truth with them.

Secondly, it is deeply moving how Jesus singles out individuals, a you or a me, to meet with in such a personal and powerful way. It isn’t surprising, but it is moving. God is the God of the individual! It reminds me of his meeting with Hagar after she flees from her home with Abraham and Sarah.

An angel finds her near a spring in the desert, completely alone and with child and asks her what he already knows. She has run away from her mistress because of ill-treatment.

God’s messenger, the angel, instructs her to return to her mistress and promises her a myriad of

descendants and Hagar’s response is: *“You are the God who sees me”*. How precious it is for anyone to recognize when they have been ‘seen’ by God. And for us, our hearts should be filled with joy and gratitude because he saw us and drew us to himself!

The ‘well’ will never dry up! Life-giving water continues to be available to us daily.

Finally, it is wonderful that the life-giving water which Jesus offered the Samaritan woman so long ago remains unchanged, not only in its purity, but in its thirst-quenching, transformational nature.

The ‘well’ will never dry up! Life-giving water continues to be available to us daily and more than that we, weak and sinful as we are, can be channels through which that life-giving water can flow from us to others.

JUST A MINUTE

with Counties new

Admin Support officer, Ian McManus.



How did you become a Christian?

As a child, I was always in church. When I was seven, I heard a visiting preacher speak about heaven and hell. It was time to decide what I believed. Over a few weeks, I bombarded my parents with questions, and one Sunday evening, I made the decision to go forward and give my life to Jesus. I was baptised a few weeks later. For the next few years, I didn't take my faith seriously. After moving to Wales, I attended a youth camp and rededicated my life to Jesus and have been dedicated to his service ever since.

Tell us about your background.

I grew up in Louisiana, USA. After a call to mission abroad my parents eventually ended up in Wales. All my teenage years were spent in Pembrokeshire and, when I left school, went to London Bible College to read for Theology, Music and Worship. I met Esther there and we were married shortly after. I felt a call to Baptist Ministry and worked for Faringdon Baptist Church for five years whilst training at Bristol Baptist College. I was inducted to West End Baptist Church, Westbury and was there for twelve years.

Why did you decide to join Counties?

My time at West End ended and I needed another job. I liked the idea of working for a Kingdom-based organisation, and I knew that working here would help evangelists and others in their ministries on the frontline.

What's your favourite Bible verse/ passage and why?

One of my favourite passages is Philipians 2:1-11. These words are a comfort to me when things are down, that even when Jesus was not seemingly successful, that's not what's important. The character of Jesus, and therefore my own character, is of greater value. When things are well, these words challenge me so that I don't get too puffed up and trust in my own ability. Rather, I continue to have the same humility Jesus had, the same trust in God for all things. My prayer is that Christians everywhere would develop the character of Jesus and make disciples.

EVANGELISTS

NORTH OF ENGLAND

- Steve & Debra Cowles
- Andy Dykes (RC)
- Julian & Ella Gutteridge
- Phyllis Jenkins (Senior)
- Martin & Angie Korchinsky (CP)
- Lee & Lesley Marsland
- Matt & Nicola Rich
- Rob & Sarah Watson

MIDLANDS

- Jordan & Lacy Armstrong (CP)
- David & Lindsey Brown
- Roger & Hazel Chilvers (Seniors)
- Angela Cooper (Senior)
- Andy Hodson (RC)
- Tim & Katrina Cracknell (CP)
- Andy & Bella Goode
- Andy & Isobel Hodson (CP)
- Bob & Rita Telford (Seniors)
- Paul & Vanessa Willmott

EAST OF ENGLAND

- Charles & Elizabeth Addoco
- Will & Lynne Andrews (Senior)
- Tim & Joy Ayrton
- Madelene Bathgate (Senior)
- Mark & Amanda Bingham
- Lionel & Katy Clargo (Seniors)
- John Hardwick
- Kim & Jo Hobbs
- Tony & Ruth Hood
- Victor Jack (Senior)
- Andy & Miriam Jelfs (Seniors)
- Colin & Linda Johnson
- Simon Ladd (RC)
- Jane Martin (Senior)

- Caleb & Adanesh Mathewos (CP)
- Andrew & Rachel Mugford

SOUTH WEST

- Jean Campbell (Senior)
- Andrew Conlan (RC)
- Steve Ellacott
- Mike & Su Strange (Seniors)
- Alex & Beth Symons
- David & Katie Symons
- Stevie & Natalie Walker

SOUTH CENTRAL

- Jonathan & Heather Brain
- Gordon & Penny Curley
- Ray Dadswell (Senior)
- Stephen & Jean Gillham (Seniors)
- Wendy Iliffe (Senior)
- John Jenkins (RC)
- Steve & Dawn Loader

WALES

- Grace Anderson (Senior)
- Clive & Fiona Cornish (CP)
- Paul & Laura Davies
- Phil Davies (RC)
- Phil & Sheila Davies
- Janet Hawking
- Lesley & Andrew Lawrence
- Mike & Jan Thomas
- Steve & Gwyn Treseder

CP – Church Planter

RC – Regional Connector

PARTNER WITH US AND THOSE WHO LIVE BY FAITH

Subscribe

Please send me:

- ☐ Ignite Magazine and Praise & Prayer diary by post
(please fill in address)
- ☐ Monthly email newsletter

My Details

<i>Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms/Other</i>
<i>Name:</i>
<i>Address:</i>
<i>Postcode:</i>
<i>Telephone:</i>
<i>Email:</i>

Your details will be kept on our database and may be shared with a local Counties Evangelist, but with no other persons or organisations.

- ☐ Please remove me from your mailing list

My Gift

I would like to partner with Counties. Please find enclosed my/our gift of

£

(please make cheques payable to Counties)

To give online by debit or credit card visit **countiesuk.org**

Gift Aid

- ☐ This is a Gift-Aid donation
(We will send you a gift-aid declaration, if you have not already completed one).

- ☐ I would like to set up a regular standing order.

Your feedback is always appreciated.

Thank You

GLO PUBLISHING

RELEVANT READING ON DISCIPLESHIP LEADERSHIP AND MISSION

'Perspectives' is published twice-yearly and is focused on discipleship, leadership and mission.

It shares best practice for Christians and local churches.

Yearly subscriptions to GLO Publishing are now available.

Subscribers will receive two issues of 'Perspectives' periodical and also one book or booklet each year.



Personal subscription 2025 - £20 a year

CHURCH/ORGANISATION SUBSCRIPTION PRICES ARE AVAILABLE ONLINE



E: publishing@glo-europe.org

T: The GLO Bookshop –
01698 275343 or 07723 043402



Making Jesus known: inspiring and equipping local churches

Counties is a Registered Charity No. 264278 and a
Company limited by guarantee registered in England & Wales No. 1041761

Address: Counties, 30 Haynes Road, Westbury, Wiltshire BA13 3HD

Telephone: **01373 823 013** | Email: office@countiesuk.org | countiesuk.org