

Archbishop of Canterbury spends a night with Ipswich Town Pastors



Last week the Archbishop of Canterbury spent a few days in Suffolk as part of the St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Diocese's centenary celebrations.

During that visit, he donned a yellow jacket and spent a night with the Town Pastors, a 570-strong volunteer project which sends Christians out onto the streets across Suffolk to help vulnerable people – mostly on Friday and Saturday nights and into the early hours of the morning – to manifest the compassion and love of Christ to those who may be in need, whether smashed out of their heads from clubbing, or homeless through circumstances beyond their control.

The Town Pastors don't reason the need; they simply minister from their hearts. They give out bottles of water, bars of chocolate, or just sit and listen at 4.00am to whomever wants to talk. As a result, tense situations are defused, and violence mitigated. They have a team back at their base which keeps in touch via walkie-talkies and prays all night for peace.

Over the celebratory weekend, the Archbishop tweeted this picture, and Lambeth Palace tweeted this one. The Ipswich Star covered the night, and one commenter on their site said:

These guys are amazing, people from all walks of life and ages coming out to help others. They are out until 4am or later, while most people are asleep and must feel like zombies for the rest of the weekend.

The police seem to rely a lot on Town Pastors to look after people that can't look after themselves and the presence that they have in the town is clear to see. I would like to applaud the town pastors for all that they do, you are massively appreciated, I just hope there is enough funding to keep it going for as long as possible because things would definitely go downhill for all stakeholder groups if they were withdrawn. It's a shame there aren't more comments and compliments for these amazing individuals I really can't emphasise enough the difference that they make

The Archbishop also had breakfast with local farmers; met with civic groups; spoke to a tent-full of people engaged in community projects; signed choristers' hymnbooks; and answered young people's questions during the Eucharist at St Edmundsbury Cathedral.

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