GOOD NEWS FOR NORWICH & NORFOLK Winter 2021: FREE

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Good cop bad cop

Well-known TV cop and panto baddie **Graham Cole** OBE is very excited about returning to the stage of the Norwich **Theatre Royal** this Christmas after a very difficult 18 months during the pandemic. **Keith Morris** reports.

est-known for his 25-year role as PC Tony Stamp in the long-running TV show The Bill, Graham, who now lives in Norfolk with his wife Cherry, is playing Alderman Fitzwarren and his twin brother, in Dick Whittington, which opens on December 11.

"It has been a very, very difficult 18

months and as a selfemployed actor there was no furlough," said Graham. "I am so excited to be on stage again as it has been a tough period not only for actors but also for support teams, sound, technical volunteers, usherettes etc."

Graham has been able to run his oneman show called "So you think you know me" in which he talks about his incredible 50-year acting career, and many of the over

160 characters he has played on stage, including in 12 musicals and 37 pantos.

Graham loves to be the baddie and his favourite role was playing Abanazar in Aladdin at the Theatre Royal back in 2012. He has also played King Rat in Dick Whittington.

"I went down the baddie route and love playing them. Coming out to a cacophony of boos from the kids who get so involved is just brilliant," he said. "It's great fun performing to families and especially children, looking at their faces, hearing the cheering and booing.

"I love pantos and Christmas time as it is a time when families will get together and maybe see three or four generations come to the theatre together. We can hear the audience coming in through mikes in the auditorium and can pick up snippets of conversation. It is so exciting to be back in the dressing room. 2021 will be a year none of us will forget, this Christmas we will make memories together at the Theatre Royal once again.

"This time we will have to do some social distancing, but I am triple vaccinated and had the flu jab, so there is nowhere else to put a needle now," said Graham. "But seriously, it is so important

"But seriously, it is so important to play our part and we get tested every time we go into the building," he said.

"Christmas is such a special time for me marking the birth of Jesus. I love singing Christmas carols and when I was in The Bill the whole cast used to go along to a carol service at the Albert Hall for charity and I loved that."

Graham has a strong Christian faith and said: "My faith

never leaves me, it is in every aspect of my life and work. 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. It really matters how you treat people, especially those who

don't seem particularly nice on the outside."

Every pantomime story has a moral, good over evil, triumph over tragedy, mirroring real life, says Graham, and Dick Whittington is no exception. Graham's character Alderman Fitzwarren takes in a homeless and jobless Dick and his cat Tommy – offering him a job and board and lodgings. Showing kindness to a complete stranger is something Graham himself is used to doing in his role as a volunteer on an NHS support helpline during the pandemic.

"One of the toughest and most moving calls I took was a man in his 80s who called after lying on the floor for ten hours after a fall and not wanting to call paramedics knowing how busy they were. ■ Continued on page four.

Graham Cole as Alderman Fitzwarren in Dick Whittington. (c) RIchard Jarmy.



Daniel Starling.

African mission start for new Norwich pastor

The African-born son of former missionary parents has been appointed as the new Assistant Leader at Oak Grove Community Church in Norwich. Keith Morris reports.

Daniel Starling was born in Chad, Central Africa, where his Norwich-based parents, Graham and Shelagh, were missionaries in the small town of Bebalem with Christian charity MAF (Mission Aviation Fellowship).

Graham was a pilot and flew missionary doctors, nurses, aid workers, teachers and evangelists around the vast but sparsely-populated country. The couple already had two small children when Daniel was born at the mission hospital.

But tragedy struck when Daniel was only one year old, when mum Shelagh contracted malaria and subsequently died of an infection.

The family moved back to the UK and settled in Folkestone. When Daniel was at high school they moved back to Norwich and Oak Grove where his grandparents were based.

"Engaged with the youth work at Oak Grove, I decided to make my family's faith my own and pursue a relationship with Jesus," said Daniel. "I made the decision to get baptised aged 15 on Easter Sunday.

"Jesus has continued to be good to me my entire life, he's always been a great comfort in times of mourning and a friend to celebrate with when life goes well.

"I have worshipped at Oak Grove Community Church ever since and the church family have developed my spiritual gifts over the years. I met my wife there, we have now been married seven **Continued on page two.**



GOOD NEWS FOR NORWICH & NORFOLK

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African mission start for new Norwich pastor

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years with a beautiful daughter who also adores the Oak Grove family.

"When I left uni, I wasn't sure what God wanted to do with my life, it felt like a toss-up between working in the video games industry or pursuing youth work, so I applied for all the jobs I could find for both. God granted me a part-time position at Integrate Youth For Christ and a year later, an additional parttime gig with North Breckland Youth For Christ.

"I cannot begin to express the gratitude I have for the lessons I have learned, the memories I hold and the role models I've met over my tenure at Youth For Christ. In that time, God was preparing me for a role in which I can serve the community where I live and worship and I'm incredibly excited for the next season."

As Assistant Leader at Oak Grove Community Church, Daniel will be overseeing the youth and children's work within the church and community.



A time to wait, reflect and prepare

■ I write this as COP26 continues in Glasgow. The world is waiting. Will the nations of the world come together to act? And will the decisions they make be big enough and bold enough to make a real and lasting difference? Many island and coastal nations know that they are running out of time; the time for action for them is almost too late. When will the longed-for change happen?

Two thousand years ago, the Jewish people were also waiting, waiting and hoping for God to send his longed-for Messiah to bring them salvation. Once again their land had been occupied, this time by soldiers from the Roman Empire. They longed for the moment God would act and set them free.

A baby born in a stable in an out-of-the-way town like Bethlehem seemed an unlikely beginning for a Messiah. It was an inauspicious start for a saviour of the world, yet Christians dare to claim that the babe in the manger is nothing less that God's own Son come into the world.



Rev Andy Bryant, is Canon for Mission and Pastoral Care at Norwich Cathedral.

The four weeks leading up to our annual celebration of the birth of Jesus are known as the season of Advent. They are a time of waiting, of reflection and preparation, as we

look forward to the celebration of Christmas. It is also a time when we cannot help but think about the present state of the world and how far it is from all that God intended.

But it is not all about waiting for others to act – whether that be God or world leaders gathered in Glasgow. The baby born in the stable comes to call us to build the Kingdom of God on Earth, to stand alongside the poor, oppressed and marginalised, and to stand up for peace, equality and justice.

Amidst the presents you give this Christmas, make a gift of yourself to the world. Make a gift of your time and energy to play your part in making a difference, to learn to tread more lightly on this precious planet and to reach in love to those around us.

The child born in Bethlehem 2000 years ago was God's gift of love to the world. May our response this Christmas, to this most wonderful of gifts, be to pass on that love to those we meet especially those who at this season who may not have much to celebrate.



Album celebrates lost twin

Five years ago Norwich Christian musician **Ben Lawrence** lost his twin brother Dan to cancer and now he is producing an album which talks openly about the loss and the hope he has since found.

rowing up, my twin brother Dan and I did everything together and music was our big thing. We started learning instruments aged eleven and went on to start own band, play gigs and record a few EPs," said Ben.

"One morning, while we were in our mid-twenties, and about a month before Dan was due to get married, I found him having a seizure in his bed. He was disorientated and took some time to come back around.

"After several months of tests and a biopsy, we found out that Dan had a stage four brain tumour. He had chemo and radiotherapy, which helped for some time, but in November 2016, he passed away.

"I'm a musician and I've spent the last 20 or so years dabbling in various forms of creativity, playing in bands from a young age and eventually ending up working as a filmmaker and editor," said Ben.

"Music has always been my passion, the thing that makes me tick. Over the years certain albums and songs have become like soundtracks to my life, helping me process what I'm going through and sending me on my way to the next season."

In October, Ben launched an online Kickstarter crowdfunding campaign which has raised the more than £10,000 needed to pay for the production of the album.

"O Wide World, is my story of finding hope after such devastating circumstances," said Ben. "It's an album of songs that talk honestly and openly about grief, my struggle with mental health and what it's like losing a brother so young. It's raw, it's real and it's something I hope will really connect with those who need to hear it.

"Along the way, I'll be involving friends and family, having them sing or play on the album and including them in the process. This album means a lot to a lot of people and I want to make sure that those who knew Dan and have walked with me get a chance to be a part of this.

"I am so excited to have my Kickstarter crowdfunding campaign reach the £10,000 mark. It is fantastic to know that this project has already connected with people, that they would want to see it happen. I am looking forward to getting into the studio with my producer Iain and recording a fantastic album.

"All of the funding will go towards the making of this album. I will not be receiving any payment for my time spent creating this project."

Find updates at: <u>https://owideworld.com</u>

Strictly stars show their faith

Strictly Come Dancing stars Dan Walker and Rhys Stephenson have opened up about the importance of their Christian faith on the hit BBC1 Saturday night show. Keith Morris reports.

trictly star and TV presenter Dan Walker has stood up for his faith, dressed as a red lobster. Popular BBC Breakfast and sports presenter Dan opted for silly over spooky and dressed as a red lobster on the recent Halloween special, saying his family don't celebrate the occasion.

While most of the show's stars embraced a scary theme, the Christian broadcaster danced a fishy jive with partner Nadiya Bychkova to the B-52's 'Rock Lobster' in matching lobster costumes.

Speaking on BBC Breakfast, Dan explained that the Strictly team had made an exception for him and allowed him to avoid the Halloween theme due to his beliefs.

"So we don't celebrate Halloween in our house and I've got to say a huge thank you to Strictly because they enabled me to be a part of that programme without sort of doing Halloween."

Dan went on to explain that he wanted to set a good example for his children by living by the standards he teaches them.

"And our kids, they would normally go to a light party on Halloween weekend or whenever that might be and I couldn't go on that programme and be a disingenuous dad.

"Anybody who's got children and they

talk to their children about what they can do and what they can't do and why they do things a certain way...

"And I can't say, 'Do as I say but not as I do', so that's where the lobsters came from."

CBBC children's TV presenter Rhys Stephenson (aged 28) topped the Strictly leaderboard with partner Nancy Xu in week eight, with a perfect score of 40 for an amazing Charleston routine.

In an earlier show, Rhys had opened up about his Christian faith, which he said was the "one constant" in his life.

"My family and I are Christians and that has been an integral part of who we are," the CBBC presenter explained. He described his church, the Parish of St James and St John in Romford, as a "second home" where he often leads the worship band and is a keen piano player.

"When everything has changed, my faith has always remained the same," Rhys said.

His church pastor, Rev David Anderton, said the church was "really proud of what he's doing" and revealed that the Strictly star prays before he goes out for every dance along with Nancy: "Rhys asked Nancy if she would pray with him and she said yes, so just before they go onto the dancefloor, they pray."

With partner Nancy, Rhys had performed a Spiderman-themed dance for the show's 'movie night' week. The presenter linked his Christian faith to a passion for superheroes, adding that the movies are "always about good overcoming evil".

On Instagram Rhys, who says he loves video games and basketball, thanked everyone for the supportive messages and gave special mention to those "who felt empowered about me talking about my faith".



Above, Rhys Stephenson and Nancy Xu perform the 'perfect' Charleston and, below left, Dan Walker and Nadiya Bychkova as Rock Lobsters. Pictures (c) BBC.

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Graham is good cop, bad cop

Continued from page one.

I was able to call them while reassuring him till they arrived. He was ok after a check-up and a cup of tea. Our older generation are a constant inspiration," said Graham. "We all need to take responsibility for our actions and decisions and together we are a stronger society - caring for each other is vital.

Graham has lived in Wroxham before and is now back living in Norfolk with Cherry, who is from Leiston in Suffolk originally, and says he has a lot of mates in the area.

Graham attends a local church and has done so wherever he has lived. "I also love going into churches during the day," he said. "I have been into Norwich Cathedral several times and just sat and got my thoughts together. Having a working faith has helped me tremendously during the pandemic.³

Graham has put his faith into action as a supporter of the Childline charity for 34 years and also has a particular concern for mental health and the emergency services, given his work on The Bill: "Playing PC Tony Stamp I felt helped to put a heart inside of the Police uniform. I started a charity with Gary Hayes, called PTSD999. The pandemic has put many of the blue light services under tremendous pressure, especially

paramedics. The biggest release from stress and

not taking it home is to talk about it talking is absolutely vital," he says "I have

never had

cloud, the

black dog, myself and

maybe my

faith has

feel it is

support

the dark



people who do have mental health problems and have been working with various charities in that field

"As an actor you really have to know yourself very well to be able to immerse yourself in the many characters you play. Some people say that an actor's job is to make people think.

In 2013, Graham was made an OBE for services to the voluntary and charitable giving sector in the UK, including his work with Childline, the showbusiness charity The Grand Order of Water Rats and as President of the National Holiday Fund, which takes sick and disabled children to Disney Florida.

Born in Willesden, Graham was deeply moved as a teenager by the famous US evangelist Dr Billy Graham - and he made a life-time commitment 'to follow Christ' at one of Billy's London meetings at Earl's Court in 1966.

While Graham has seen national success in show business, there have been hard times, too: "my faith and the support of my church and family helped me to keep upbeat," he says

As a Christian, Graham has sometimes said no to particular acting roles that he was offered as he felt they were in conflict with his faith, but something else has always come along he says: "after all I have the best agent in the world."

www.ptsd999.ora.uk

The heartbeat of Christmas will come to life across Norfolk and beyond as Andy Jones unfolds the nativity story from a box of delights for children in churches and schools. Sandie Shirley reports.

ndy, who heads up the charity Raise, is helping youngsters to be immersed in the Christmas story and capture the awe and wonder through smell, touch and sound. The teaching is engaging, visual and hands-on. "It means children can think about the story and what it means to them and wonder in the moment," says Andy.

After many years as a church children's worker, taking a gigantic leap of faith, Andy wanted to share his heart and his faith with even more youngsters. As a pioneer, he rides the surf of adventure and challenge and in 2018 Raise became a charity. Its hallmark is creativity, fun and ingenuity as it takes the Old and New Testament Bible stories to a new and rising generation in surprising ways to "raise the standard of kids work in schools and churches"

Its mission has enlarged beyond imagination winning the support and favour of sponsors, parents, pupils, schools and churches taking him to unexpected places as he opens the Bible and shares "God's love letter" with thousands of children over the years.

But he knows his life "was for something of God" because of the faithful prayers of his late mother who died suddenly during the Covid-19 pandemic last summer.

"When I was born, she made a pledge to

give my life to God for his use. Her faith shone through with her trust in Jesus. She championed me and everyone in our family, cheering me on every step of the way."

Andy has been the fruit of her willing sacrifice and love. He has been unafraid to try and break new ground, using technology and interaction to relay the message that was faithfully conveyed to him as a child.

In the aftermath of his mum's death, he says: "I would not have pushed through that dark time without my faith but I knew God was always there and he is still good and faithful.

"You don't get over grief - you learn to live with the sorrow and the loss. Last Christmas during feelings of acute loss, I held on to the Bible verse that promises that tears of sadness will be turned to songs of joy. Through my sadness I can bring joy and encouragement.

Andy believes he is now developing an empathy for others who have lost, suffered, and struggled in the pandemic and through other situations. Utter grief can be turned to bring understanding and comfort others

After his mum's death, the father of two ran a marathon raising £4,000 to build and fund an 'escape room' for youngsters. The portable inflatable pod will be transformed into a Biblical setting with questions to answer and puzzles to solve to help explore different gospel themes and is ready for trial in the New Year with the story of Joseph and his coat of many colours.

From the outset, Andy's creative tools have included puppets, props and playful interactions, creating memorable moments to fuel imaginations and trigger conversations. As one fully engaged pupil said: "How do you do an assembly and get us to think about the deep things of the Bible?'

Andy writes and tailors his presenta-

tions for different school and church objectives with assemblies, theme days and weeks and residential events. There have been lots of memorable occasions - like the sounds of a hundred children's voices praising their God as the knowledge of him goes from their heads to their hearts, explains Andy. "But I have also been privileged to share my faith with 650 children at a huge Christian festival."

When schools closed during the pandemic, Andy did online assemblies reaching hundreds of children at the same time. He also trained with 'Christians Against Poverty' to run two short sessions to help children with financial management giving Raise another dimension. "The course looks at how people earn money as well as family spending, creating a budget and saving and giving," says Andy.

He reflects on his mission: "It is helping kids to understand that faith is not something that binds us but frees us to be ourselves and who God has called us to be. It is not about what people say or the world around them that says what we should be. It is about speaking truth and telling kids what the Bible says: They are chosen, loved and God's masterpiece; there is no mistake in what he creates. They need a constant voice of truth, positivity and encouragement that includes helping them to take hold of the dreams and hopes they have in their hearts."

To solidify that during an interactive prayer space, Andy gets them to sit on a throne and wear a crown as princes and princesses in God's eyes and realm. Sharing the Good News enables them to decide what they will believe and how they will live", explains Andy.

If you'd like to support Raise or find out more – use the links below

Email: andy@raisekidswork.org.uk Web: www.raisekidswork.org.uk





Norfolk gran's stitch in time mission of love

nna has been honing her stitching and knitting skills for over 80 years and now works each day in her 'factory' – the front room of her bungalow – where the walls are covered with photos of children wearing her beautiful products.

"God has given me a gift," she said, "and I could not live without it." Anna asks friends and fellow parishioners for second-hand pillowcases, curtains and tablecloths, which she turns into colourful, bright dresses.

"We have just dispatched about 700 handmade items of children's clothing to the 5th Gospel Christians," reports Arnie McConnell, from St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic church in Wymondham, where Anna is an enthusiastic member.

The charity gives direct support to Christian refugee families from Iraq, with a particular focus on the community of 400 people living in Madaba in Jordan. These refugees refused to renounce their faith and were forced to flee when the Islamist terror group ISIS (Daesh) seized the Nineveh Plains in the summer of 2014.

Anna learnt to sew and knit while growing up in rural France, 35 miles from Paris as one of the youngest of 18 siblings and step-siblings when her mother married a man with eight children. She followed in her mother's thrifty footsteps to ease the family budget with her make-do, mend and sew philosophy when she was taught to sew by a nun friend who also nurtured her Christian faith that grew with daily church attendance before school. At the end of the war she married a British soldier, Jack Bayles, and they moved to Wymondham. He became a Catholic and they settled in the parish. They adopted four children, including two, Monique and Jean-Pierre,

who came from Africa. Anna has now made hundreds of dresses for children in Uganda, Zambia and Kenya, Thailand, Jordan, Vietnam and more. Often she will send them out with missionary priests who are living in Norfolk.

"They call me Mother Anna in Thailand," she said. "In Africa I am simply the Dress Lady."

So how many has she made altogether?

"Well, I sent just under 300 to Thailand, and 300 to Jordan... Oh, I've lost count. What's the point of counting anyway?"

Anna goes to Mass at church during the week when she can. "As soon as I come home from church I get onto it," she said. "Seven days a week. I can make a dress in 45 minutes and a skirt in 20. But I don't force myself; it just comes naturally. I finish about 4pm. I belong to a couple of clubs, but I don't have time to go."

"There is an important message here," comments Arnie, "about the connectivity between compassion from an inspiring woman living out the Gospel, and a group of Christians supporting a traumatised group of people who have lost everything." www.5gc.org

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PROJECT

Finding hope together

with the**BigGive** Christmas Challenge

Every donation you make from 12pm on 30th November until 12pm on 7th December will be





Chance to have your charity support doubled

Drug and alcohol misuse charity The Matthew Project recently opened the doors of its Norwich recovery hub to its supporters and the wider community.

■ Guests included Kevin Maguire, Lord Mayor of Norwich and Caroline Jarrold, High Sheriff of Norwich. The event showcased the centre, which is unique for Norfolk and one of very few across the UK. There were exhibitions of poetry, client testimonials, photography, art, as well as a tour of the facilities.

Many of the guests helped to fund the centre's full-scale renovation when it opened in 2019 and were able to see the results with The Matthew Project achieving what it set out to achieve; to provide a place of positive community, support and skills for people affected by substance misuse, mental health issues or other barriers to thriving.

It has been widely publicised during the pandemic that there has been an increase in alcohol use, as well as mental health issues. As a charity, the project has responded by adding capacity to its Next Steps adult recovery team with a worker starting in the east of Norfolk and one in the west of Norfolk, with Norfolk County Council Public Health support. At the centre it has also employed a workshop coordinator to strengthen skills.

At the very heart of the work of the centre is the 8-week recovery support programme (RSP). During the first lockdown it had to close, so the RSP team adapted their support: calling daily, creating online support groups, sending out support packages, doing door-stop welfare checks.

So far, The Matthew Project has supported 155 people, in a structured way, with over 6,548 attendances since opening the new centre. It costs £1200 per person to go through the programme.

In order to raise funds this Christmas, The Matthew Project is taking part in a national matched funding campaign, The Big Give Christmas Challenge. From 12pm on November 30 until 12pm on December 7. All donations will be doubled up to £15,000.

If you would like to support the campaign, visit: <u>donate.thebiggive.org.uk/campaign/a056900001tyPe4AAE</u> or scan the QR code in the advert below.

Funding future support at our Next Steps Centre for Early intervention work with young people with mental health issues, and at risk of substance misuse and county lines Adults in recovery from addiction enrolled on our Recovery Support Programme

Veterans, serving personnel, and dependants affected by substance misuse and/or PTSD

www.matthewproject.org/the-big-give-christmas-challenge

Caring for the planet and

Two young Christian

entrepreneurs are trying to care for both the planet and for people across Norfolk through an online organic vegetable and fruit box scheme they launched during the pandemic. **Keith Morris** reports.

ormer youth worker Matthew St John and environmental scientist Joshua Smith took on the running of online food company Goodery about five months ago, based in an industrial unit in North Norwich.

They believe that by encouraging local organic growers and making it easier for consumers to access the premium produce and "make the good choice" they will not only help care for our shared planet and its natural resources but also care for its people.

The company was launched at the start of the pandemic by the duo and their friend Silicon Valley entrepreneur John Ellison who moved from Colorado to Norfolk five years ago.

Matti is the son of parents who were

missionaries in China but who had to visit Hong Kong from his Stalham home before he found a Christian faith for himself. When he came back from his travels he did two years of youth work with St Thomas Church in Norwich before lockdown hit. Josh meanwhile had come back from running a coffee shop abroad when lockdown was announced.

The original idea for Goodery came out of the particular circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic when John wanted to supply fresh local organic vegetable boxes to NHS staff who were renting some of the properties he managed in Norfolk so they could isolate from their families while working in hospitals etc.

Matti and Josh were in from the start delivering the boxes to key workers. "There was a real need," said Matti. "Other people would pay for a box for a key worker but very quickly people were saying I would also like a box for myself." After two months, Goodery bought out

an established organic vegetable supplier Arthur's Organics.

"The vision was to connect people with their food and where it comes from," said Matti. "We believe that God has asked us to both care for our planet and care for its



everyday essentials from local producers. Delivered with zero emissions.



Organic veg boxes from £10.45

£10.45 £3.25

Matti



Josh www.goodery.co.uk





Scott



FOOD



people. For us it is a Biblical mandate. We want to create relationships with our customers, farmers, growers – there is a whole community that is so passionate about organic growing here in Norfolk. Just to be part of that community is just incredible.

"Over the lockdown we were dealing with hundreds of customers every week and lots of them were quite elderly and hadn't been going out much if at all or speaking to anyone else," said Matti. "Having a conversation with them was one of the highlights of the lockdown for me."

Josh said: "Our journey has made it clear that what is going to make the longest-term difference is deepening relationships with our growers and suppliers here in Norfolk and Suffolk.

"For us that means focusing on protecting the soil, reducing people's impact upon the environment through their food and building relationships and sharing God's life as we see it with this very committed community. To be good stewards of our part of the earth in a uniquely Christ-centred way.

"We feel that the church really should be taking the lead in environmentalism and in many cases it is. For us it is God's call but it is also what we must do as a race to survive on this planet."

Looking ahead to the future, the company plans to set up its own market garden in South Norfolk and start to grow its own produce and provide work for one or two people.

"The conventional way of growing food is by definition destructive for the planet," explains Josh. "It destroys top soil, emits a massive amount of CO2 into the atmosphere and pollutes our rivers with excess nitrogen due to fertilisers. Organic agriculture does the opposite, it works with rather than against nature and can therefore be used to build up soils and improve soil health and to draw down CO2 from the atmosphere.

"That's the reason that organic matters

NEWS

its people

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> so much and chimes with the call to protect the environment. When talking to customers about why organic is such a premium, but often more expensive product, we try to communicate the hidden costs in the supermarket model. The hidden cost is to the soil and to the environment which makes it exceptionally expensive in the long run for us and for future generations.

"Many people know that organic is the best choice as they become more aware of the environmental impacts of their food shopping," said Matti. "What we try to do is to make it as easy as possible for them to make it with the convenience of organising vegetable and fruit boxes and direct home delivery which,

electric vans, is carbon-free. The more the organic movement grows and the more people that join it, the cheaper it becomes for everyone.'

with our use of

In the summer there are plenty of local crops such as tomatoes.

aubergines, peppers and cucumbers for example. Into the autumn there are leafy greens, kale, squashes and root vegetables. Winter crops are things like parsnips and Brussel sprouts. In the spring, Goodery does have to bring in produce from the West Country or Europe though.

"The current awareness of environmental concerns surrounding the Glasgow climate talks means that it is a key time to get the message across," said Matti, "and it is amazing to see how in the last two or three years the climate movement has massively grown across the whole world.

"We feel that the church should be involved in this and

versations with churches who want to know more about how they and their members can reduce their carbon footprint and have a positive climate impact.

"For most people food represents about one third of their carbon footprint from growing it, transport, buying, packaging and consuming.

"It is a massive area in which by making a small change you can hugely reduce your carbon footprint," said Matti.

Goodery also supply other high quality locally-made items such as roasted coffee. fermented goods, whole foods, refillable wine containers.

To contact them email support@goodery.co.uk, tel 01603 577971, or visit goodery.co.uk



Dave and Anna Lloyd with their children, Georgia and Zach.

Interested in an invitation to church in a garden?

Some people are simply not interested in going to church, and Norwich minister Rev Dave Llovd totally gets it. But he does have an alternative idea.

I don't play golf. I don't go to a golf club. I'm not a member. I don't follow it on TV, and, in all honesty, I am not at all interested in learning.

Please understand that I have nothing against it or people who play it. Many of my friends love it and I love the fact they love it. But it's just not for me. It is one less thing to obsess about, spend time on or follow. But I did go to the park once, and some friends brought a club and golf ball, we played pitch and putt on the roughest course.

Hitting the ball into outer space, hanging out with friends and combining the whole thing with a football was so much fun. I have also played crazy golf, broken a club in half on a miss-hit, belly laughed my way around a course and got quite competitive. But I don't play golf.

I meet so many people who tell me that they aren't religious, and they don't go to church. In the same way that I tell people I don't play or do golf. And yet I see them building loving community, wanting to care

for one another, change the world, champion the poor, love the lost and probably have a cheeky pray once in a while.

I woke up yesterday to see this quote by Miles Adcock doing the rounds on Instagram: "When you find authentic, messy community that embraces all of you and not just the shiny good parts, run towards it like someone left the gate open."

The Garden Network is playing a small but hopeful part in encouraging the exploration, cultivation and kindling of simple faith communities from the grass roots for the nongolfers, the golfers and the crazy golfers.

Alongside traditional forms of church we want to encourage everyone to have a swing in the park with friends and to join with the fermenting of faith that is alive in the nation. We are seeking to open the gate to authentic, messy community in simple, replicable and sustainable ways.

We are rediscovering some of the underwhelming, ancient, soul-fuelled practices that lie behind a life of faith without needing to own the whole set of clubs. Why? The first question we read God asking humanity in the Garden of Eden is 'where are you?' It begins with being found. Being found, being known, being loved, being understood are

all good places to start the process of becoming.

David Foster Wallace the atheist, professor, author and thinker wrote: "In the day-to day trenches of adult life, there is actually no such thing as atheism. There is no such thing as not worshipping. Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship. And the compelling reason for maybe choosing some sort of god or spiritual-type thing to worship - is that pretty much anything else you worship will eat you alive.

Worshipping Jesus won't eat you alive. Instead in His death we find life. He invites us to taste and see a new life with Him and to be a part of His renewal of heaven on earth. Bishop Irenaeus (140 - 200 AD) wrote: "The Church is planted like the Garden of Eden in this world."

We want to cultivate that Garden in Norfolk. If you want to find out more, you can start exploring at garden-church.org or you can search for Garden Church - NFK on Youtube and @garden.nfk on Instagram.

Dave Lloyd is associate vicar of St Thomas in Norwich. The Garden Network is run in partnership with the Diocese of Norwich **Church Planting and Revitalisa**tion stream.

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Help us to stage Norwich Passion Play

Would you like to be part of a professional Passion Play being staged on the streets of Norwich city centre next Easter and see the Gospel story performed in public?

■ The inter-church Celebrate Norfolk team behind the project are looking for volunteers in a number of areas to help stage two free performances on Easter Saturday, April 16, 2022, along with Christian theatre company Saltmine.

Community Cast Actors

To take part in the production and join professional actors from Saltmine Theatre Company. A first taster session for the community cast has been arranged for Saturday December 4 where you can find out more.

Sound technicians

We need people who have some experience of operating sound systems to join our team to help make sure that everyone can hear and experience the play properly.

Stewards

To help ensure the event goes safely and the audience enjoy themselves. Experience is great but not essential.

Head Steward

We also require an experienced Head Steward to lead and help train the stewarding team.

■ If you would like to join our team for this one-off event, please ring 07712 787762, or email <u>passionplay@celebratenorfolk.co.uk</u> with your contacts details, which role you are interested in and, briefly, any relevant experience you have.

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Norfolk mentors help to rebuild lives

Community Chaplaincy Norfolk (CCN) is looking for more mentors to support men and women as they leave prison. Volunteer mentor **Carole Thomas** explains what motivated her to get involved.

What led you into mentoring for CCN? I was no longer working

A full-time and I came across an advert for CCN mentors. I discovered that the objectives of the organisation aligned closely with my desire as a Quaker to 'seek that of God in everyone'.

For me, whatever someone has done, however damaging it was to the victims and society, there is a spark of goodness within them that, if encouraged and supported, has the chance to grow and bring about internal change – like the acorn which becomes an oak tree. Not all oak trees are of an imposing size or make a large impact on their surroundings, but all contribute something to the world with sufficient nourishment.

I believe that the vast majority of offenders deserve a second chance (or a third one or more) to be able to turn their lives around: to build meaningful relationships, experience fulfilling lives and make a positive contribution to society. Victim reduction is also key to my motivation. The opportunity to support people in making more constructive choices can mean the difference between the rotating door of the criminal justice system and sustaining a new lifestyle. I have been shocked to learn

that a high percentage of the prison population didn't complete their education or gain qualifications, or else have mental health problems.

Judging someone, then simply locking them up and throwing away the key, costs a lot of money and doesn't give the return it could for society, especially if there is insufficient chance for prison-

ers to address their offending behaviour and learn an alternative life path.

Q Did you have any previous experience supporting exoffenders?

Not directly, but I worked for some years as a careers' adviser and then within a children's services department in a multidisciplinary early help team. During this time, I came across families and teenagers affected by crime who found themselves within the criminal justice system.

I also spent about three months volunteering for a specialist training provider within a young offenders' institute (YOI) working alongside the team delivering pre-release preparation courses for young offenders.

Q What training, support and ongoing development is provided for mentors?

The training programme covers a range of topics such as understanding the criminal justice system and something of what life in prison is like. Then there are modules on basic mental health, communication skills for motivating change, recognising and exploring barriers to change, goal setting and reflecting on progress, networking with other agencies and sources of help (this is particularly relevant when mentees need to find accommodation, sort out financial problems or access other services), understanding safeguarding responsibilities and reflective practice as a mentor, including an awareness of personal boundaries.

I was glad to have been able to join a CCN group for a visit to HMP Norwich with the lead prison chaplain just before the first lockdown. It helped me to glimpse something of the prisoner experience and have a small awareness of prison life, culture and language.

All mentors receive regular supervision and advice from the CCN team. You are not on your own when volunteering with CCN. There is also a webbased resource and a database for recording progress. There are regular mentor meetings for support and ongoing training. CCN mentor Carole Thomas.

What are the challenges of the mentor role? During the Covid-19 pandemic it has not been possible for mentors to meet with the mentee before the

release day. The result of this is that some with good intentions lose the confidence or motivation to be able to engage with the service. Maintaining abstinence from substances and old habits can be really challenging for mentees, especially when they return to their home area.

What are the rewards of the role?

A I have found that I need to keep remembering that I am working to the mentee's agenda and their rate of progression, not mine. Progression is not linear and can seem frustrating, but I am learning that when a mentee turns up to meetings and does what they say they will do, then that is good. I have one mentee who speaks about enjoying a weekly experience of 'normality', which is enough for me.

Mentors work with prisoners in the lead-up to release and then support them in reintegrating back into society. If you are interested in becoming one, please look at the website <u>norfolkchaplaincy.org.uk</u> or e-mail <u>manager@norfolkchaplaincy.or</u> <u>g.uk</u> to arrange an initial discussion.

Widow's mission set to continue

The Pakistani widow of courageous former Norwich Methodist preacher **Colin Gillett** has flown to Norfolk to help ensure that the couple's work with street children in Lahore can continue, in his memory. **Keith Morris** reports.

our years ago Colin Gillett, a local preacher in the Norwich Methodist Circuit, upped sticks and moved from Norfolk to Pakistan on a mission for life to work with orphans and street children.

Colin suffered long-term from the debilitating Crohn's Disease which flared up again and caused him to pass away from cardio-respiratory failure on September 7 this year.

While in Pakistan, Colin married local lawyer, Sunita Nayab Gill (32), whose family were already supporting a local orphanage.

Charity pioneer Sunita raised the funds to repatriate Colin's body back to Norfolk for his funeral in October but was prevented from attending herself due to flight restrictions over events in Afghanistan.

She has since flown to the UK where she is spending a few months meeting charity supporters in Norfolk, Bedford, Sussex and Redcar and trying to establish a UK support group for the charity One World Welfare Organization to help ensure its future funding.

Speaking recently while in Cawston in North Norfolk, Sunita said: "We work with poor street children, beggars and orphans who are given a free education. We also have a foodbank and give food parcels to the brick kiln communities and free them from their debt so that they are released from bonded slavery.

"Last year we also started a church in the community which now has 100 members and Colin was our local preacher. My father was a Catholic and my mother belonged to the Church of Pakistan. I am now looking to do some religious training so I can continue the church work in my own country,"

said Sunita. Recently food parcels were given out at the church in Colin's memory.

"Colin was the person doing most of the work for the charity. I worked as his translator, helping him communicate with the people as I speak Urdu. His death could be very tough for the charity because he did all of the finances which came from the UK and the USA. Covid has also made everything harder for our work."

Sunita has already spoken to some friends and church supporters of Colin in Norfolk who have said they are going to continue supporting the work.

"We would like people to support us and to share our work so that more and more people know about us," said Sunita. "I would love to set up a support group in the UK because it would really help the charity to grow more."

Sunita and other Christians in Pakistan do face daily persecution: "It is very tough being a Christian in my country," said Sunita. "I have to be very careful because many people think Christians are their enemies. Christians are denied educational and professional opportunities and there is a lot of discrimination."

Sunita would like to become a UK citizen after her



"Because Colin had a red UK passport that helped us force the authorities to give us protection when we faced opposition to our school work with children, though their parents supported and protected us," said Sunita. "A UK passport will also help me to come here and go back which at the moment is quite difficult.

"I thank God for helping me to get a visa to come to the UK, as even at the airport they stopped me and wanted to detain me, but I was allowed to travel. I have problems in my country and could seek asylum but I do not want to do this as I want to go back and continue the missionary work we are doing."

Sunita, who practiced for 10 years in Pakistan's higher courts as a lawyer, also has plans to expand the work of One World, by raising the capacity of the orphanage from 25 to 50, increasing work on women's rights and empowering them and educating girls who are often deprived of their basic right to education.

The charity also collects clothes and toys for children's shoebox schemes at both Christmas and Easter.

If you would like to become part of a UK support group for the charity, or support its work, you can contact Sunita at: <u>Sunita gill@rockmail.com</u> or visit <u>www.oneworldwelfareorganization.weebly.com</u>









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YMCA celebrates double awards win

Two teams from YMCA Norfolk were presented national awards at the annual Youth Matters Awards in London on November 12, held at the Grand Sheraton Hotel hosted by YMCA England and Wales.

YMCA Norfolk walked away with Training and Education Project of the Year and Families Project of the Year – among a staggering 101 YMCAs across England and Wales.

The YMCA Norfolk Families and Communities Team were awarded for their exceptional dedication to supporting families across Norfolk; and were congratulated for stepping up significantly in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The team were titled 'Family Project of the Year'. They have delivered over 7,000 hours of support through rapid response/return alone, supporting 393 families in crisis.

Additionally, they have worked hard to continue to house and support single parents in YMCA Norfolk's Umbrella Housing services, providing a safe and secure environment for their children providing additional support, food parcels, additional parenting support and ensuring the best opportunity to sustain change.

Collecting the award on behalf of the team were Esther Nixon and Kendal Cullabine.

In addition to Family Project of the Year, YMCA Norfolk's E-learning Service was also successful on the night – named as 'Education and Training Project of the Year.'

Despite a challenging year for young people, the E-learning service provided specialist education to 175 students; ensuring they maintained their interest in learning throughout tough times.



Ex-city broker to lead church



Be part of a Passion Play being staged on the streets of Norwich city centre next Easter

The inter-church Celebrate Norfolk team behind the project are looking for volunteers in a number of areas to help stage two free performances on Easter Saturday, April 16, 2022.

Community Cast Actors

To take part in the production and join professional actors from Saltmine Theatre Company Sound technicians

We need people who have some experience of operating sound systems to join our team to help make sure that everyone can hear and experience the play properly.

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Former high-flying London insurance market broker, **Rev Tom Madders**, is set to become the new pastor of Norwich Central Baptist Church (NCBC) in January. **Helen Baldry** reports.

orn and bred in Essex, Tom grew up in a Christian family but didn't come to faith until his early twenties when he and his wife-to-be Jo were planning to get married. Tom said: "Jo wanted a church wedding, but I didn't want to make promises to a God I didn't believe in, so we were at a bit of an impasse. A local Baptist minister suggested that I should do an Alpha course to see if it changed my perspective. It did, and the following year not only did Jo and I get married, but I found myself exploring a faith of my own."

Tom and Jo joined a local village church where he was baptised and encouraged to get involved in serving the church and the community.

Tom worked as a London insurance market broker for 12 years, a job he thoroughly enjoyed. As he grew in his faith, he became aware that God was calling him into fulltime ministry.

He left his job in the City in 2016 and started studying theology at Spurgeon's College in South London. He graduated three years later with First Class honours and has been the Associate Minister at Billericay Baptist Church for just over five years, including a year as Acting Senior Minister.

Tom said: "I can't wait to get started in my new role at NCBC. I'm really looking forward to getting to know my new church family and making new friends.

"Jo and I, along with our son Timothy,

are really excited about this new chapter of our lives, and although we don't know the area at all we already feel very 'at home' here, which can only be an affirmation that this is the place that God wants us to be."

"Leading a city church is going to be a new experience for me, and some aspects will be outside my comfort zone, but I'm confident that God has called me to work alongside the wonderful people at NCBC and as long as I rely on Christ for guidance and strength he will equip me for the work that lies ahead."

Tom is looking forward to engaging with the universities and supporting the student community. He also has a passion to encourage families to come and explore their local church.

He said: "Church is a place where love and joy exist in abundance, and after the past couple of years I think we could all do with experiencing some love and joy. So many people have struggled with the various challenges that have resulted from the pandemic, and it has been a very dark time. Jesus told us to let our light shine, and I hope that we at NCBC can find ways to do just that here in Norwich and the surrounding area."

In his spare time, Tom enjoys spending time with friends and family. Jo and Timothy share his love of the outdoors, and after spending the majority of their lives in the Billericay area they are looking forward to branching out and exploring Norfolk. The family often watch cricket together, and Timothy and Tom enjoy playing too and hope to discover opportunities to play in Norfolk.

Tom said: "I enjoy most sports and outdoor pursuits, and I also love reading preferably in a comfortable chair, next to an open fire, in a quiet corner of a local pub with a good pint!"

Pandemic learning curve for school

The challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic have meant a whole new learning curve for Norwich School and its chaplain, **Rev Corin Child. Sandie Shirley** reports.

he corridors have lain silent, the classrooms empty and pupils and teachers alike have had to adjust to a different way of life in response to Government guidelines.

The pandemic has meant hardship, online lessons and rising pastoral care issues. "It has been brutal for some pupils," says chaplain Rev Corin Child who is part of the team at one of the oldest schools in the UK.

Corin has been at the city school in Cathedral Close for seven years; he is chaplain but also an 'A' level teacher and class tutor but the challenges of the pandemic have been unprecedented: "Nobody who signed up for school wants to do lessons on computers since they appreciate the benefits of the classroom. Those that have struggled before have struggled more without face-to-face

pastoral care and interaction," he says. "The aftermath has been concerning, regarding mental and physical health with heightened stress and anxiety. "It is heart-

Norwich School

Corin Child with

chaplain Rev

some pupils

breaking." As the pupils have returned to school there is help at hand to enable them to cope with the crisis and its legacy of loss and isolation. "We work in a team and there are many pastoral care systems in place in a bid to ensure pupils do not slip through the net. There is a staff member who is head of welfare and class tutors and referrals to various organisations for more serious cases," says Corin.

He explains he was glad to now be working in a school, as it reopened as soon as possible, while some churches are still wondering how to fully re-set their agendas and comeback from the pandemic.

The school, founded alongside Norwich Cathedral in 1096, has continued to blaze a trail for education and welfare, building on its strong Christian heritage.

No longer a boarding school, it attracts pupils from far-and-wide as a co-ed independent grammar school with classes from reception to sixth form. Pupils have won scholarships while others have special needs and now the choristers include girls. The former hallowed halls of an ancient educational institution have changed and evolved.

"Working in a school is very different from parish work," says the former Anglican minister in King's Lynn who oversaw a diverse congregation. "It is busy and timetable-driven but a busy good day is the best feeling in the world. And situated in Cathedral Close, there is a real buzz with interesting people who come to the cathedral library. It is a stimulating place to be a school chaplain."

He continues: "Positioned next to the cathedral it is reasonable that there should be a Christian input which brings a positive injection but pupils can decide for themselves what they choose to believe. I am a Christian and I believe everything Jesus offers is something people can find and brings purpose and hope and can change your life."

Assemblies include a Bible passage that has lessons that anyone can learn from. There is a Christian Union, a parent group that prays for the school and a variety of cathedral services that include those for Remembrance Day and Carols at Christmas. Meanwhile the choristers work hard and thrive taking a positive pride in what they do as they sing alongside professional musicians while engaging with Christian teaching, explains Corin.

He has contended with his own challenges but they have borne increasing empathy for others. He developed Covid at the beginning of the outbreak and now manages the effects of Long Covid.

As with so many households, he has also had to juggle work around the needs of a growing family, so he has understood the pressures.

As a father of three, he has witnessed the progress, needs and challenges of his own

children as they have grown into adolescence and he has been a parent governor when his children were at primary school.

His parental experience over the years has helped him steer a path of rapport, encouragement and counsel for pupils that has included assistance with university options for his sixth form tutor group.

He also has a heightened empathy for pupils with special needs as a close family member has autism. Together with parents, pupils' needs are met, and progress is promoted, and encouraged.

"One pupil with special needs left the school in a blaze of glory when he played Widor's Toccata on the organ at the cathedral during the final service of the year."

Such progress is heartening: "It keeps me going as I cheer the pupils on."

Corin's prior experience has also stood

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him in good stead. After university he did some teaching and ran assemblies at 14 schools around London. In addition, he has taught English as a foreign language. During his ministry in King's Lynn,

Corin spent half a day a week working with a chaplaincy team for young people at the College of West Anglia. It stoked the interest for his chaplaincy at Norwich School where he also teaches PRE (philosophy, religion and ethics).

"It is interesting how pupils relate to the subject as we look at different issues and talk them through while asking: 'Is this world all there is?" says Corin, as he reflects on the voice and culture of social media that influences their lives.

But whatever the challenge and modernday climate, Corin is intent on helping to pave a path for an up-and-coming generation.



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