**Fleet Angels – A 3-step challenge!**

How life can change in a short period of time!

In November my wife, Carol, was offered the post of Associate Vicar in the parish of Fleet and preparations were made to move south, as a family, from Retford in North Nottinghamshire.

For myself, I had to give up my full-time job with Nottinghamshire County Council and start looking for work. Luckily, I was offered 2 interviews; to take place on the same day – just 5 days after landing in Fleet!

Fast forward and I was offered a half-time post with Hampshire County Council, which allowed me to apply for the role of ‘Project Leader’ with the Fleet Angels. Somehow it just felt that God had a hand in this somewhere!

Back in Retford, I had been a volunteer Street Pastor for 5 years and had felt a sense of great joy and privilege in being able to serve God in an active way.

The ethos of Street Pastors was always to serve; to be there for the vulnerable; whether they be drunk, lost, hurt or simply looking for someone to listen. We were told from the very start that we were NOT there to preach! If the opportunity arose to speak of our faith, then all well and good, but we were primarily there to show God’s love through our actions. I have walked cold streets, picked up empty bottles or swept up broken remnants, offered simple first aid, handed out bottles of water, knelt to change the six inch heels for flip-flops on the feet of weary revellers, dealt with the angry along with the unwell amongst many other things.

This may sound a bit grim but there have also been times of great joy, laughter and the opportunity to explain to those who wonder why we would bother to give up our nights dealing with those who have chosen to get into such a drunken state by paraphrasing the shampoo maker, L’Oreal, “Because you’re worth it!”

So, being given the opportunity to continue this ministry (Yes, it IS a ministry!) here in Fleet is both daunting and humbling.

Following Nigel Pool as Project Leader will be a difficult thing to do as he was there from the beginning and has clearly done an amazing job. His drive, vision, attention to detail, planning and commitment are an inspiration and his support and encouragement since my arrival have been not only welcome but invaluable.

In the coming weeks we hope to begin a recruitment drive as Fleet Angels volunteer numbers have dropped in the past few years from around 40 to about half that number. Where the Fleet Angels once patrolled on Friday and Saturday nights, they are now only able to cover Saturdays.

Many reading this article may be saying, “It’s not for me,” or “I couldn’t be out all night,” but I would ask everyone to consider; as Christians, we are ALL called to love God and to love one another; we can show God how much we love Him by sharing His love with others – showing that love through our actions. Fleet Angels are the visible proof of God’s presence on the streets of Fleet; they say, “actions speak louder than words” and I firmly believe this is true and that groups like the Fleet Angels are the proof.

So, I would make the following, simple, 3-step challenge;

* With an open mind, seek out the Fleet Angel(s) in your congregation.
* Talk to them. Ask them about their experiences; why they do it and what it is like.
* Think and reflect on what they tell you and then…pray!

Then, and only then, consider what you can do to help. If you would like to see what it’s like then please come out as an observer – just one night, no obligation, no expectation! If you don’t feel it is for you, then perhaps you could offer to pray when the Fleet Angels are out on patrol – prayer support is vital! Maybe you could offer to be a ‘Prayer Buddy’ for one of the volunteers.

**But please…DON’T DO NOTHING!**

If you would like to speak to me about Fleet Angels please contact me;

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