

Street Pastors Come to Acton

On 9th October at Acton Hill, to singing with a live band and speeches from Les Isaacs of Ascension Trust, the mayor, the police, and leaders of churches in Ealing, Ealing Street Pastors was launched. 11 trained street pastors and 3 prayer pastors were commissioned, and then, after celebration and food, supporters who had gathered for the commissioning service left for their homes and the work began.



First there was a briefing in the church by the police about sensitive areas that they asked the Street Pastors not to visit that night following drugs raids during the previous week. The police were concerned that until the Street Pastors were well known they might be mistaken for police activity because of their uniforms.

Then the Street Pastor teams together with experienced Street Pastors from South London, who were to lead the teams for this first night, and those who were staying on at the base to pray for them moved into the hall at the back of Acton Hill Church to prepare for their first patrol on the streets of Acton. There were further briefings and equipment issue from co-ordinator, Lehoma, a photo call for the Ealing teams – you can see the photo on the Street Pastors above – and prayer before three teams hit the street. Usually only one team of four would be patrolling the Acton Hill area on any one night, but on launch night all the Street Pastors were on the street, introducing themselves and the project to the clubs and pubs in Acton, offering help to anyone in need. Each of the teams patrolled on the Uxbridge Road up to the railway bridge and back, returning to base for tea/coffee and a warm-up. Meanwhile back at base four prayer pastors prayed for the safety of the teams and the families they had left at home, for the success of the venture, and that the Street Pastors would be able to help those in difficulties, that they would be encouraged in their work among the young people and the homeless on the streets.

Street Pastors are not on the streets to do the job of the police, although they will summon police assistance if the need arises. Their job is to keep people on the streets at night safe, to be there to help anyone who needs help. A lot of what they do is very mundane. As they patrol they pick up and dispose of any glass bottles or other potential weapons, so that no one can use them against another in the event of an argument. They carry bottles of water for people who have become dehydrated because of drink or drugs, flip-flops to protect the feet of fashion victims who can no longer stand – or stand on – their high heels, and insulating blankets for people who have mislaid coats. “What for?” you might say. Surely it serves them right. But everyone was young once. The writer remembers picking up her daughter from an eighteenth birthday celebration carrying her shoes in her hand.

When the teams finally gathered for debriefing and prayer, one team had been instrumental in preventing a fight outside the Redback Club.

Ealing Street Pastors range in age from early twenties to old age pensioners. Some of them leave families at home with spouses to ensure that other people’s families reach home safely. At present there are only enough Street Pastors in Ealing to patrol the Acton area but further training sessions for Street Pastors are planned for next year and the Ealing Trinity Circuit is sponsoring training for two Street Pastors so if you think you could do this contact Lehoma on ealing@streetpastors.org.uk

Prayer Pastors are also urgently needed. Perhaps your church could field a prayer team on a Friday night, once a month. It sounds like a long night from 11pm to 3am but time goes more quickly than you might think and the risk of allowing the teams to go on patrol without prayer back-up is unthinkable.

Thank you.

By Mary Blackwell