

PEOPLE & PLACES

July 2026



CHURCH
.ORG ARMY

HELLO...IT'S GOOD TO BE TOGETHER!

Welcome to your summer edition of People & Places. I'm delighted you're here to read more about the inspiring ways God is at work through Church Army across the UK and Ireland.

As summer arrives, bringing longer days and the promise of new growth, this edition is filled with stories of hope, transformation and faithfulness. Sunshine may never be guaranteed in this part of the world, but I hope the stories in these pages will brighten your day and warm your heart.

You'll meet people whose lives have been changed by God's love, and others who are faithfully sharing that love in their communities. From the wonderful Church Army Vice President Pam Rhodes, reflecting on almost 40 years of bringing faith to life through television and radio, to Mary's uplifting story in Medway, whose own journey to faith has inspired her to shine the light of Jesus to others. Each story is a reminder that God is transforming lives today.

One thing that strikes me again and again is that God's love never stops

with us. When we encounter the hope and joy found in Jesus, we are drawn to share it.

My prayer is that this edition encourages you in your own faith, and perhaps even inspires you to take a small step of your own: to pray, start a conversation, invite someone to church, or simply look again at how God might be calling you.

Thank you for your prayers, generosity and faithful support. Because of you, Church Army can continue sharing the good news of Jesus where it's needed most.

We thank God for you.

Blessings,

Sarah Waller
Editor



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MAKING ROOM FOR GROWTH

As Church Army continues to look ahead, our CEO, **Matt Barlow**, reflects on growth, change and the importance of making space for what God is calling us to become. Here, in his regular *People & Places* feature, Matt shares why this season of change is also a season of opportunity, hope and fruitfulness.

'Hello friend,

At this time of year, gardens and allotments are alive with growth. After months of preparation and care, we begin to see what is flourishing, while still tending to what needs pruning, supporting or clearing. I love that Jesus tells us that His Father is the gardener. He uses so many different gardening and farming analogies to share the message of the Kingdom.

As we continue through a time of change at Church Army, I often return to the analogy of transforming an old allotment. Anyone who has tried will know that it involves cutting back some things, maybe even uprooting some things, and potentially planting them in a more suitable place. Importantly, it also means making space for what remains to thrive, while beginning to have a vision for what you hope to plant in the future.

When it comes to real life and ministry, I don't think anyone ever takes pleasure in cutting back or

uprooting. But Jesus was pretty clear that such things are not necessarily wrong, even if they feel painful. One of the advantages of making space is the opportunity to appreciate afresh what is already there, which I believe we are already starting to do.

When I first joined Church Army, Envoy and Missional Youth Church Network (MYCN) both seemed like side projects. However, as I've got closer, I've seen the incredible Kingdom work they are doing in delivering our aims and mission.

Envoy has had such an impact that we have been approached by potential partners asking us to put together a proposal to scale it up. This is incredible, considering that many of those who participate in Envoy say they feel much more confident about evangelism. I can't wait to see Envoy making a real difference in a church that needs it so desperately.

MYCN received backing two years ago from the Church of England to grow to 65 projects by March 2027, and is already at 59 with more in the pipeline. Most of these projects are in areas of deprivation, beginning the journey of reaching young people for Jesus and making disciples who then go on to make more disciples.

After much listening across our network, we are now in the final months of discerning our future vision and strategy. What will our garden look like? What will we grow, and how will we bear fruit? I'm confident there will be new things for us as we move forward. I'm equally excited to see some things that may have been crowded out in the old garden, given the space, focus and attention they need to become all that God intends them to be.

There is no allotment or garden where it's possible to grow everything, but you take the space and resources that God has allocated and seek to use them for the maximum amount of fruit. That is at the heart of the vision of our new Senior Leadership Team, and the Board, who continue to play such a wonderfully supportive role.

I thank you for your continued prayer and support – you are the water and the fertiliser that makes it all grow. We have been through tough times in the last year, but Church Army has proven itself to be hardy enough to endure a winter. The prayerful commitment of you, our supporters, has carried us through a season of great trial and challenge, and I am deeply grateful.'

"The prayerful commitment of you, our supporters, has carried us through a season of great trial and challenge."



NEWS FROM AROUND CHURCH ARMY

Noel takes the next step

In our March edition, we shared Noel's inspiring story of reconnecting with faith through The Grove at our Newry Centre of Mission in Northern Ireland. We're delighted to bring you an exciting update: Noel has now committed his life to Jesus.

Reflecting on this significant moment, Noel said: "I have given myself to Jesus. I know there is no other way. We all need Jesus in our lives."

After years of struggle, Noel describes finding renewed hope, strength and purpose through the support he received at The Grove.

"If you had told me two years ago that I'd be here, I would have laughed," he said. "I want God in my life. I feel stronger, happier. It's like the Holy Spirit has been poured over me. Jesus is within me."

"We all need Jesus in our lives." – Noel



Noel is passionate about sharing his story and encouraging others to explore faith. He credits The Grove and the support of the team in Newry for helping him take what he describes as "the biggest step in my journey."

"Church Army has helped me take that massive step. It's been like opening the floodgates. Every day is a good day, and that's because of Jesus."

We praise God for Noel's journey and pray that many others will come to know the transforming love of Christ through Church Army's ministry.

Our breakfast table is growing

More and more people are regularly joining us for our Online Prayer Breakfast, and we'd love you to be part of it.

For 30 minutes every quarter, we gather to hear stories from frontline ministry, give thanks to God and pray for the people and communities we serve. It's a wonderful way to connect with the work of Church Army and see how your support is helping to transform lives.

Join us on **15 July at 8am** for our next Online Prayer Breakfast. We'll be hearing from Andy Milne, the leader of the Missional Youth Church

Network (MYCN), who will share more about the exciting work underway to reach a new generation with the good news of Jesus.

Your prayers make a real difference, and we'd be delighted to welcome you!

To book your place, email onlineevents@churcharmy.org or call **0300 131 9200**.



Pray for Church Army staff and volunteers serving across the UK and Ireland. May God strengthen and sustain them as they share his love with those who need it most.

**PRAYER
POINT**

Honorary Canon recognition for Tracy

We are delighted to share that Revd Tracy Marlow, from our St Helier Centre of Mission in South London, was appointed Honorary Canon of Southwark Cathedral in May.

This recognition celebrates Tracy's faithful ministry and the significant contribution she has made to the life of the Church and local community. We give thanks to God for Tracy's leadership, compassion and dedication, and we send her our warmest congratulations on this well-deserved honour.



ORDINARY PEOPLE, EXTRAORDINARY CALLING

Our annual Admitting and Commissioning Service is on **Saturday 11 July at 1pm at Sheffield Cathedral**, and we'd love you to join us. Together, we'll celebrate and pray for four remarkable individuals as they are Admitted into the Office of Evangelists and become Commissioned Church Army Evangelists.

We are delighted to introduce you to Phil, Donna, Jon and Anjela. Please pray for each of them as they take this important step in their calling.

Meet Phil

Phil is passionate about creating spaces where people feel welcomed, heard and able to explore faith without barriers.

"I think part of my calling is to give a voice to people who struggle to have one," says Phil.

As someone who is neurodivergent and dyslexic, Phil has often felt overlooked, yet he has continued serving others and sharing the gospel. Through Church Army training, he realised he was already living out the calling of an evangelist.

Growing up in the care system, Phil was often connected with local churches, where his faith journey



began. Reflecting on his childhood, he says, *"I was always getting into trouble, but one of the Sunday school leaders took me under his wing. He kept talking to me, and he saw something in me."*

Alongside training, Phil has juggled work and family life in Edgeley near Stockport. As he prepares for Commissioning, Phil reflects: *"I've known for a long time that God had his hand on me. This feels like confirmation of that calling."*

Meet Donna

Donna serves her local community in Northamptonshire through youth ministry, primary school prayer clubs, community café outreach, and supporting autistic young people and families as a peer support worker.

“There’s always hope and light in Jesus. That’s what I want people to know,” says Donna.

Donna’s faith journey began through the quiet influence of her grandmother, whose prayers and love first introduced her to church and to Jesus. *“Looking back now, I can see how much my nan influenced me,”* Donna reflects.

Her path towards evangelism began after being introduced to Church Army through her local church. *“I was immediately drawn to it,”* she says, *“especially the work with people who wouldn’t necessarily step into church buildings.”*



Training with Church Army has been deeply transformational. During her studies, Donna discovered she was neurodivergent, helping her better understand herself and those she supports.

“Church Army believed in me and removed barriers that might otherwise have stopped me training,” she says.

Whether supporting families, working with young people, or simply sitting alongside someone in conversation, Donna wants people to feel seen, valued and loved.



Meet Jon

Alongside his Church Army training, Jon has served through local town chaplaincy, Street Angels, prayer ministry and prison chaplaincy, while balancing family life in Aylesbury with his work as a tree surgeon and landscape gardener.

Although Jon grew up in a Christian family, his faith became personal in his early twenties after a period of questioning.

"I needed to decide for myself whether this was true," Jon explains. "I started looking seriously at the evidence for the resurrection and who Jesus really was."

That search became a deep conviction. *"When I realised Jesus truly had died and risen again,*

everything changed," he says. "I felt relieved, but also aware that I needed to share that truth with others."

Later, Jon sensed God calling him into ministry. *"One morning I woke up with the words 'Church Army' impressed very strongly on me. I knew immediately it was from God."*

Jon now volunteers regularly in prison chaplaincy. *"It feels like being a light in the darkness. If God can forgive me, he can forgive anyone."*

Meet Anjela

Anjela serves through a Bus Ministry in Dewsbury and her work with families in Seacroft, Leeds. In both roles, she shares the love of Jesus with people who may never otherwise encounter church.

Although she grew up in a Christian family, Anjela says her faith developed at the age of 15. She shares: *"I'd heard the Gospel hundreds of times before, but that night God really touched my heart."*

Years later, Anjela became involved with the Destination 211 Bus Ministry as an occasional volunteer, but it grew into a calling towards evangelism. *"I started talking to the young people, getting more involved," she says. "Then, one day,*



a Church Army Evangelist told me, 'You'd make a great evangelist.'"

Anjela describes Church Army training as life-changing. *"It helped me discover who I am in Christ," she says. "I now know I am walking in the path God has set before me."*

As she prepares for Commissioning, Anjela remains confident in God's leading: *"Whatever happens, I know I'm safe and secure in God."*

Church Army's training team walk closely alongside each Evangelist-in-Training throughout their formation journey. Elli Wort, Head of Training and Equipping at Church Army, tells us...

"This special occasion marks the culmination of years spent discerning God's call and preparing for ministry. When Jon, Anjela, Donna and Phil began training with Church Army, they were already called and gifted by God. During their time with us, they deepen their faith, refine their skills and grow in confidence as evangelists. We look forward to celebrating their journeys and commissioning them for the next chapter of ministry."

"Church Army Evangelists are so important...they serve people others pass by."



Rt Revd Saju Muthalaly

We are also honoured that Church Army's Vice-Chair, the Rt Revd Saju Muthalaly, Bishop of Loughborough, will lead the service as we mark this glorious occasion together. He says:

"Church Army goes where the maps fade. It sends people to the doorstep, the park bench, the ward corridor, the food bank queue and the streets after dark. Church Army Evangelists are so important because Christ meets people where they stand. They listen long, speak plain, show up again, and help the whole Church relearn the simple move of mission: go, notice, stay, invite. In a time of noise and loneliness, we need witnesses who carry hope in their pockets and put it, gently, into someone else's hand."

Church Army's CEO, Matt Barlow, shares his thoughts:

"Anjela, Jon, Phil and Donna have all demonstrated their commitment; they will inspire you with their stories, and we will support them with our prayers and our attendance. I truly hope you can join us for this special day."

Please join us for this joyous occasion if you can on **Saturday 11 July, 1pm at Sheffield Cathedral**. All are welcome.

FROM 'WASTE OF SPACE' TO FLOURISHING EVANGELIST

Pete Tomkinson never imagined he would become a Commissioned Church Army Evangelist. After being told he was a “waste of space”, he spent years doubting himself.

Today, Pete works across Blackburn Diocese with the M Power programme, equipping people to share their faith and serve their communities. His story shows that, given a chance, people can flourish.

Growing up in care, Pete experienced feelings of insecurity and abandonment. Hoping for direction and purpose, at 16, he joined the British Army. While he built a successful career, something was missing.

Everything changed when he met Linda, a Christian who would later become his wife.

“She had a joy that seemed to overflow from her,” Pete recalls. “I quickly realised it came from her relationship with Jesus.”

Pete gave his life to Christ, and as his faith grew, so did his passion to help others find the same hope and transformation.

When Church Army training was suggested, Pete felt afraid. He'd left school with no qualifications, and his teacher's cutting words: “You're a waste of space. You'll be a drain on society,” haunted him.



“Church Army accepting me for training felt deeply personal,”
 Pete says. *“For the first time, an organisation was saying, ‘We believe in you. You can do this.’”*

He soon discovered that Church Army offered more than academic learning. *“I expected a course; what I found was a family,”* he says.

The training equipped him with new skills, confidence and a deeper understanding of evangelism.

“I used to joke that my evangelism toolkit had just one tool: a hammer called ‘Jesus loves you,’” he laughs. *“Church Army helped me build a bigger toolkit. It taught me how to journey with people and help them discover their God-given potential.”*

Pete now works with M Power, helping identify and equip people who may never

have seen themselves as leaders or evangelists. *“Many of the people we work with doubt themselves or feel they have little to offer,”* he explains. *“In many ways, M Power feels like an echo of my own story.”*

Having experienced the impact of someone believing in him, he now helps others recognise their God-given gifts. That is so rewarding for him.

His story reminds us that when people are encouraged and shown God’s love, lives can be transformed.

A personal thank you

“I would like to say a special thank you to all Church Army supporters.

You make training accessible for people like me, and now I can reach those on the margins of our communities. I have been transformed in ways that are difficult to put into words.

Church Army saw something in me that I didn’t see in myself. They invested in me, helping me discover that I was capable of more than I ever imagined.

Thank you for making that possible.”

– Pete



PAM RHODES ON FAITH, PRAYER AND 40 YEARS OF STORIES

Pam Rhodes, one of Britain's best-loved Christian broadcasters and a Vice President of Church Army, has spent almost 40 years sharing stories of faith. We spoke with her about her faith journey, what she's learned along the way and the power of prayer.

Faith brought to life

Pam was raised in a home where prayers were said each night, and Christianity was woven naturally into family life. But when she moved to London as a young woman, faith became something more than familiarity.

Through TV and volunteer work, Pam saw local churches support families and bring local communities together, especially where life could be difficult.

"There I saw Christianity in action," she reflects. "It made me want to play my part as a Christian rather than simply pay lip service to it."

For nearly four decades, BBC's *Songs of Praise* has taken Pam into churches

and homes across the UK. Many conversations focus on profound loss and hardship, with very difficult questions... *"What was it like when you lost your daughter?"* or *"How did you cope?"*

"So many interviews over the years have ended with all of us in tears," she shares, "I am always amazed by people's generosity. Many share painful

*"I've always had
a sense of Christ
holding my hand"*



experiences, hoping that their story might help someone else.

"Often, those I have interviewed have become lifelong friends," she reflects. "It's not fair to go into someone's home, share such an intimate experience and then simply walk away."

Faith in action

Pam has a deep admiration for Church Army's Evangelists and projects. She shares, *"What impresses me most is the way they get alongside people, treat them with dignity, respect and worth,"* she says.

For Pam, this is authentic faith: ordinary Christians serving faithfully, making an extraordinary difference in the lives of others.

After hearing thousands of stories of faith over nearly 40 years, Pam's advice for anyone feeling



discouraged or distant from God is simple:

"Take it to the Lord in prayer."

For her, prayer is an ongoing conversation. Pam talks naturally to Jesus throughout the day.

"I've always had a sense of Christ holding my hand," she says.

Over the years, she has heard countless stories of the power of prayer.

"I think people underestimate the power of prayer in general," she says, *"prayer has power, and we forget that at our peril."*

For Pam, one thing remains certain: God is still at work, often through ordinary people. And very often through prayer.

Join Pam for some of the best-loved hymns every Sunday at 8am on her show, *Hearts & Hymns*, on Premier Christian Radio.

"...prayer has power, and we forget that at our peril."

WE CAN EQUIP YOUR CHURCH FAMILY

Every church longs to see lives changed by the love of Jesus – in our streets, homes, communities and among those who feel forgotten or far from God. A Church Army talk is a simple but powerful way to help your congregation reconnect with that calling and be encouraged for mission.

When we visit, we bring more than an update. We share frontline stories of hope: people being met with compassion, friendship, prayer and the life-changing good news of Jesus. These stories remind us that God is still at work in the hardest places, and that every prayer, gift and act of partnership matters deeply.

For supporter churches, a talk can be a moment of encouragement and renewal. It helps your church family see the fruit of faithful support, celebrate what God is doing through Church Army, and be stirred again for everyday mission. It can deepen prayer, inspire confidence, and remind people that sharing faith often begins with simple acts of love.

Whether your church has supported Church Army for many years, or is just beginning to discover our work, we would love to visit. Each talk can be tailored for a service, small group, mission evening or special event, bringing frontline stories, encouragement and free faith-sharing resources that help churches and Christians share faith with confidence in everyday life.



Book a Church Army talk today and help your church family be inspired, equipped and drawn deeper into God's mission.

Contact Sherry Owolabi, Church & Partnerships Officer on 0114 252 1636, or by emailing sherry.owolabi@churcharmy.org

Photo: St Peter's Church, Belper

WAYS TO GIVE

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Visit **churcharmy.org/donate** to:

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Church Army
Pennine Five Campus
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18 Hawley Street
Sheffield, S1 4WP

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Call **0300 131 9200** to speak to us in person and make a donation by card over the phone or to increase your monthly giving

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0300 131 9200 or send us an email at **supportercare@churcharmy.org**

Pray for our supporters, whose faithful prayers and generosity make our work possible. May they know how deeply grateful we are.

**PRAYER
POINT**

FINDING BELONGING IN BRADFORD

For many young people in Bradford, life can feel uncertain. Opportunities are limited, safe spaces are increasingly rare and so finding a place where they feel accepted can be life-changing. That's why Church Army's Bradford Centre of Mission, in partnership with the Diocese of Leeds, is committed to supporting young people and their communities through Sorted.

Sorted is a Missional Youth Church (part of MYCN) that has been walking alongside young people across Bradford for more than 20 years. Through creating spaces where they belong, build confidence, explore faith and discover hope, Sorted helps young people navigate life's

challenges and realise their potential.

Church Army's Jonny Shaw co-leads the project and tells us more about the difference your support is making.

"I've been with Sorted for almost three years now, working with young people who are mainly unchurched. I spend time in local secondary schools, getting to know young people, listening to them and building relationships.

A lot of our work starts by simply being present. Spending time with young people during lunch breaks, chatting and listening to what's going on for them. We're not teachers,



we're not there to tell them off. We're simply people who care about them and want to listen.

Sometimes it takes years to build that trust. A young person might not come along to Sorted for two or three years after first meeting us in school. But that's okay. We keep showing up.

What we offer first and foremost is belonging. When young people know they are loved, accepted and valued, they become open to exploring bigger questions about faith, purpose and identity."



"We're here to love them and pray that they will find a relationship with Jesus." – Jonny Shaw

Overcoming challenges and building confidence

"When a young person comes to Sorted, we want them to feel accepted as they are. Some of them are from difficult backgrounds, have little confidence, or may be facing challenges at home that no one else sees. They often feel like they don't belong anywhere.

Here, there is no pressure; they can relax with a drink or have a chat. We want them to feel safe. I think that's one of the reasons Sorted works, we accept them as they are and give them space to belong.

Faith is an important part of who we are, but it's not a condition for being here. We let them know they can explore faith with us, we'll answer any questions and share how Christians approach life's challenges, then we trust God to do the rest."



“Church Army and Sorted have changed my life.” – Willow

Incredible moments

“One young person who joined us described themselves as an atheist, but they started asking questions and slowly became curious about faith. During a gathering, we placed an empty chair in the middle of the room and asked, ‘If Jesus was sitting here, what would you ask him?’

Without hesitation, this young person said, ‘Why have you chosen me?’

It was one of those moments that completely stopped us in our tracks. Since then, that young person has been baptised and confirmed. But transformation doesn’t always look like baptism. Sometimes it’s confidence or simply a young person realising they matter. We’ve seen young people go from barely

speaking to thriving at university, and others who seemed destined for a very difficult future start work and begin building a completely different life.

One young person who could easily have ended up in prison is now approaching adulthood with a job and a future ahead of him. Watching that journey unfold has been one of the proudest moments of my time here.

Many of our volunteers were once young people at Sorted themselves. They know what it means to find belonging and be supported through difficult times. Now they’re helping create that same experience for the next generation. That’s special.”

Creating connections

“Young people today face enormous pressures. Social media, loneliness, anxiety and a lack of opportunity can leave many feeling disconnected. Sorted offers real conversations, real relationships: a place where young people are known and valued.

We’re here to love them and pray that they will find a relationship with Jesus. And we can only do this with the support of Church Army.

The funding and prayers of Church Army supporters make this work possible. Quite simply, Sorted wouldn’t still be here after 20 years without that support.”

The true impact of Sorted is seen not only in the activities that take place each week, but in the lives of the young people who call it home. Every conversation and every opportunity to explore faith is part of a much bigger story. Over time, young people begin to grow in confidence,

discover their value, and encounter the love of Jesus for themselves.

Willow has been attending Sorted for almost four years. In those four years, she has found faith, belonging, and her life has been transformed.

Willow told us, *“Church Army and Sorted have changed my life. They have supported me on my faith journey. When I didn’t have a faith, I was kind of lost. But Sorted has taught me so much, and now I know that God is somebody who is always going to be watching over me. That has changed my life.”*

Thanks to your faithful prayers and support, young people like Willow are finding a place to belong and explore faith for themselves. Together, we are helping more young people discover their value, their purpose and the life-changing love of Jesus.

Pray for all Church Army Evangelists, that they would be filled with God’s love, strengthened in their ministry, and encouraged in the calling he has placed on their lives.

Pray for more people to discover Church Army, whether through our resources or evangelists, and be inspired to share the good news of Jesus.

**PRAYER
POINTS**

TAKING THE PLUNGE INTO EVANGELISM



Neville Barnes, CA

Most adults learning to swim don't jump straight into the deep end. They edge slowly down the side of the pool, carrying years of caution, fear and self-consciousness. Children, on the other hand, seem to throw themselves in without a second thought.

For Envoy Team Leader and Church Army Evangelist Neville Barnes, that difference says a lot about how many Christians feel when it comes to sharing their faith.

Church Army's Envoy is a learning community that helps Christians grow in confidence as everyday

evangelists. Through podcasts, coaching communities and practical encouragement, participants across the world are discovering what sharing faith looks like for them.

"Envoy is getting people from the poolside into the water," says Neville. "Without quite realising it, they start to move down into the deep end."

Yet unlike many evangelism programmes, Envoy isn't focused on techniques or scripts. Instead, it begins with a different question: how do we help people recognise what God is already doing in their lives and in the lives of those around them?

Evangelism that feels natural

Joanna has recently discovered the difference the Envoy programme can make. For her, life was very full, and trying to fit something else in felt impossible, yet something about Envoy made her think again.

"I felt really drawn to Envoy, and its emphasis on listening to the Holy Spirit and discovering how God works

through ordinary, everyday conversations," Joanna recalls. "Looking back, I think God was saying, 'This is right for you at this time.'"

Previous experiences of evangelism had felt uncomfortable and overly forceful, but Joanna found Envoy refreshingly different. *"This felt much more gentle and more suited to my personality," she says. "It almost healed some of the negative feelings I'd developed about evangelism."*

Envoy helped Joanna recognise that sharing faith often begins with relationships, listening and being attentive to what God is already doing, rather than following a formula.

"It's made me see opportunities in everyday life," she shares. "It affirmed that building relationships and having conversations when people are ready is valuable."

Joanna found that Envoy helps people discover their own authentic way of sharing faith. She tells us, *"It has helped me realise that the way I naturally connect with people is evangelism too. It gave me confidence in that."*

Perhaps you want to share your faith, but aren't sure where to begin? Envoy is a gentle, practical way to dip your toe into evangelism. The programmes begin this autumn.

To find out more, visit
www.envoy.website

"What appealed most was Envoy's emphasis on listening to the Holy Spirit and discovering how God works through ordinary, everyday conversations." – Joanna



WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU SAY YES?

It's mid-morning at the College of the Resurrection in Mirfield. In one room, first-year trainees are wrestling with new ideas and fresh perspectives. Down the corridor, second-years are reflecting on how ministry and learning continue to shape their calling. Between sessions, conversations spill into corridors and over coffee as experiences from prisons, schools, hospitals, churches and community projects are shared.

This is what we found when we recently had the pleasure of visiting one of Church Army's residential weekends to discover what our three-year training programme really looks like for those preparing to become Commissioned Evangelists and Pioneers.

Not everyone arrives at Church Army training filled with confidence. Some come with years of ministry experience. Others arrive wondering whether they are capable of studying at all. What unites them is a shared sense that God is calling them to share the good news of Jesus in the places where they live, work and serve.

Ste is a second-year Evangelist-in-Training:

"I've never been an academic, but God has put it on my heart to be an evangelist. I'm being given the skills to share the good news in all sorts of relatable ways."

More than just learning

Church Army's three-year training programme combines theological study, practical ministry and spiritual formation. Trainees gather for residential weekends throughout, where they learn together, reflect on their experiences and deepen their understanding of mission and evangelism. Assessments take a variety of forms, recognising that people learn and communicate in

"I'm being given the skills to share the Good News in all sorts of relatable ways." – Ste



different ways. For many trainees, balancing study alongside work, family life and ministry commitments can be challenging, which is why Church Army's experienced tutors provide support, encouragement and guidance every step of the way.

Yet when trainees talk about their experience, it is often the relationships they have built that leave the deepest impression.

"Training with my cohort feels like a fellowship of believers coming

together and going in the same direction, to share God's love," says Ste.

That sense of fellowship is woven throughout the training journey. Personal tutor groups bring together different cohorts, creating opportunities to learn from one another's experiences, share wisdom from diverse ministries and encourage one another through challenges and successes alike. Friendships are formed through a shared calling.

"Church Army has given me a deeper sense of curiosity about who God is..."
- Sarah



A deeper faith

For many trainees, that calling extends beyond the walls of a church. Some feel called to ministry as a chaplain, others are passionate about serving through food banks, and pioneering ministries. But all are drawn to meet people who have never encountered the love of Christ.

Sarah Louise, Pioneer-in-Training, explains:

"Church Army has given me a deeper sense of curiosity about

who God is, and a deeper sense of confidence to go out and reach people."

Deepening faith, practical experience and growing confidence are at the heart of Church Army training.

It is equipping trainees for a lifelong vocation of sharing God's love and taking the hope of the gospel into the places where it is needed most.

THE RIPPLE EFFECT OF A WARM WELCOME

Five years ago, Mary first walked through the doors of Church Army's Medway Oaks in Kent looking for community and support. At that time, she could never have imagined that one day she would be helping to lead it. Yet today, she is helping others discover faith and belonging.

Medway Oaks begins

In 2019, Church Army Evangelist Stephen Ramshaw found that Sunday afternoons could be really difficult for people experiencing homelessness or living in vulnerable housing. Many services and community spaces were closed, leaving people with nowhere to go. Medway Oaks was created to meet that need, offering a warm welcome and a place to belong.

Now, the ethos is the same and at the heart of each afternoon is the 'God Slot', a time to explore the Bible, pray together and reflect on faith. Many who attend are not Christians, but conversations about God are now a natural part of the community.

Here, Mary's journey began.

Meet Mary

Spending time in the care system, her childhood was difficult, and as an adult, Mary was searching for connection and stability.

After losing close family members, she drifted away from church and struggled to return. *"When some of my family died, I stopped going to church. I didn't think I could cope. But when I walked into Medway Oaks and met Helen, it felt really good walking back into church."*

"It was like they accepted me for who I am"

Mary returned every week, and gradually she started helping with drinks and supporting others who came through the doors. Her confidence grew, and so did her faith. She decided to be baptised with her partner, Jay, and since then, Mary has continued to flourish. Today, she helps organise volunteers, leads prayers and is stepping into leadership roles.

A leader flourishes

“The acknowledgement that she’s a leader has been life-changing for her,” says Helen, Church Army Evangelist at Medway.

Mary now encourages others to come along and explore faith.

“I tell everyone to join us. I’m helping others with their faith and to understand God a bit more. Some people who come don’t know whether to believe or not, and...

I tell them Jesus is my Lord and Saviour.”

Helen sees that Mary has a gift for connecting with others. She tells us: *“If you can get that breakthrough with that one crucial person in a community, they will reach people that the rest of us can’t. Mary is one of those people.”*

Through Mary’s warmth, authenticity and growing confidence, Church Army is connecting with people who might otherwise never walk through the doors.

Mary is prayerfully considering what further steps God may be calling her to take.



“I’ve been told I’ve got an evangelist’s heart, so I’m excited to see what’s next.”

Five years ago, Mary arrived looking for support and community. Today, she is helping others find faith and hope.

Together, with your support, we can offer a warm welcome and share the love of Jesus with more people like Mary.

CHURCH
ARMY
.ORG



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