

Rail Pastors Report – Monday 19th December 2016

Time – 7.30 – 9.30pm

Team: Alban Shrimpton, Callum Noblett, Stephen Bull & Chibuzor Al-Madi

Stations Visited: Mill Hill, Hendon, Cricklewood & West Hampstead

No. interventions: 3

As I begin to write this report, I have just heard on the radio that the number of people taking their own lives in the UK is at a record high. This is a sobering statistic and it is the reason we are out tonight – and as often as we can get out. It isn't the news you want to hear five days before Christmas. I am grateful we have opportunities on the rail network to make a difference and save someone's life. Throughout the 70+ patrols we have done since summer 2014, we have saved lives and deterred many from taking this path. That is an amazing thought. I am extremely grateful to everyone involved who has made this possible – GTR, the BTP, members of churches (rail pastors and the prayer teams), Ascension Trust and you reading this.

This is just the Barnet team. Since its conception, rail pastor teams have been developing in many cities, boroughs and towns around the UK and this gives me such hope. Together, we can make a difference.



Keeping our distance on a cold, December night at Cricklewood

After our initial signing-in protocol at Mill Hill, we decided to board the next available train southbound and head for West Hampstead – a station that we don't normally patrol, but following a conversation with BTP earlier in the week, this station was mentioned as it had been the unfortunate scene of some sad events. We felt it right to extend our patrol pattern and observe life on the platforms there. Callum and Chibuzor got into conversation with someone there and then who missed his stop and has an operation tomorrow. He was very anxious and, seeing that they

were “pastors” wanted them to offer a prayer for him, which they duly did. Encouraged and strengthened, he then caught his train, albeit now with an air of peace about him!

Not long after that, whilst aboard the train, Callum and Steve entered into conversation with a man who also wanted help as he had gone through turmoil this year and was struggling to find the strength to go on. This was a timely intervention – exactly the tonic he needed before Christmas. After offloading his problems and burdens, he visibly looked calmer and at peace; this really was a case of “a problem shared is a problem halved.”

This was all very encouraging, yet paradoxically quite disturbing that the pre-Christmas rush affects so many people, propelling certain individuals into a downward spiral of panic, depression and inability to cope. There seems to be something about this date: in 2014 we saved a man’s life. That one was the result of a drunken stupor, this one like a pan of hot water at boiling point, bubbling over. Perhaps it’s the weight of society’s expectations regarding the ‘perfect Christmas?’ – who knows?!

Anyway, at Hendon, the mood did change, as we encountered a young man in his 20s pacing around one of the bus shelters on the southbound platform who was very angry - swearing and gesticulating. It was here that we decided in the first instance to keep a bit of distance and assess whether or not this man’s behaviour affected anyone else. We all prayed he’d calm down, without us getting involved. Thankfully, he did. It was at this point that Chibuzor and Callum approached him and talked him down, taking the heat out of the situation. It was a very productive and encouraging end to the patrol – and indeed, to the year.