

sanj•tuary real coffee • fresh smoothies • chilled beats • a listening ear

a place of refuge and protection

a safe place

a special place

a spiritual place

Sanj•tuary is fast approaching it's third year of service to the night-time culture in Wellington Telford. Sanj•tuary was born in December 2008. The vision is to provide a safe place for people who use the Nightclubs in Wellington, it is a mission partnership between Safespace and Wellington Methodist Church. We seek to create a place where those who feel threatened, insecure, lonely, helpless or just caught up in the whirlwind of the nightlife can find safety, a relaxed place and people willing to listen and to be peacemakers in the town. We run Saturday Nights from 11 until 5 (or until the Clubs are empty) and operate two teams made up of volunteers, in the main members of Safespace but with support/involvement from local Churches. We now have several volunteers who are not Church members but have had reason to use the Sanj•tuary service and have since offered their time to help. Staff are trained by ourselves and are provided with T-shirts/Identification. There is a minimum of six staff working each session. This December as well as our regular nights, for the third year running volunteers will be working "fighting Friday", Christmas Eve and New Years eve.

Team 1 - The Gate team. The Gate team focuses on first response; on meeting people as they leave the night-club, chatting with them as they wait for friends and/or transport, calming people down, providing safe footwear (flip-flops) listening to people and where appropriate sharing their stories. They also work at build relationships with Club and Door Staff, the Police, Taxi-Marshals and local Taxi Firms. We find we are the only people on the streets who are free to respond in a caring way and we are regularly brought into situations by the Police and Door Staff, they have also both sent people into the venue.

Team 2 - The venue team. The venue is Wellington Methodist Church Community Room – The situation of the Methodist Church is perfect for engaging with the many people who use the Nightclubs etc. in Wellington. The Community Room is itself ideal as it has separate access, ensuring the security of the rest of the building, access to the Kitchen and toilets. The room is decorated with temporary fixtures; curtains covering notice boards, rugs and soft furnishings etc. Telephones are available for people to call Taxi firms. We provide Coffee, Tea, Soup and Toast, Smoothies and Cookies and Brownies cooked on the premises. Refreshments are free but we have a donation box available to help cover costs. The venue team look after anyone who comes into the venue, provides refreshments, cleans people up, spends a lot of time listening and talking with young people, works to make people safe - calling medical help, taxis, etc. We are not overtly evangelistic however we encourage staff to be willing to share their story/faith but primarily to listen and to build relationships. There is a table with free information on drugs, alcohol, relationships etc. also small Bibles (second hand Gideon New Testaments we were able to get free) and some faith based leaflets (sourced from SGM Lifewords - <http://www.sgmlifewords.com/uk/en/>) In the summer we use a small Marquee (4m square) in the car-park. Both Gate and Venue Team members are provided with walkie-talkie radios for communication and security.

Media. Sanj•tuary has been featured on the local and national media (Radio 4). BBC Radio Shropshire awarded us their "Hats off to Humanity" tag. During a programme made by BBC Radio Shropshire we raised the issue of internal trafficking. Andy Giddings wrote.

“I was chatting to Mark Berry, from the Sanctuary group in Wellington while waiting to do an interview. He mentioned he was concerned about teenage girls being groomed by criminals in Telford and used for sex. I also spent a couple of nights out in Wellington, watching the work done by the Sanctuary group. Sanctuary is a church organisation which meets every Saturday, offering people leaving clubs and bars a safe, relaxing place to unwind before they make their way home. I was met there by a local mother who believed her daughter was targeted. The mother said she often saw the men responsible parked there on Saturday nights. But that night there were police cars parked in the spaces often used. Later though we spotted a group of young girls staggering out of a club and walking straight past a row of waiting taxis. We followed them and saw them approached by a group of young men outside another bar. The mother claimed these were the same men who had targeted her daughter. It seemed it was happening again right before our eyes. A couple of weeks later the mother agreed to be interviewed herself and one thing that impressed me was how she drew strength from her faith. She was also willing to forgive the men who had targeted her daughter. But, it was also very clear that better awareness of the issue was needed. The mother admitted at first she didn't know who to turn to. We decided to approach Telford and Wrekin council about setting up a joint awareness campaign. We agreed to produce a set of information leaflets, along with an information line - operated by the BBC”

Stories. There have been many stories over the last 2 years, the longer we run the more we find people wanting to share their lives with us and the more we are being asked about our reasons and faith. Some of the notable stories include a young soldier in December who was drinking heavily just prior to being posted to Afghanistan over Christmas. Sanctuary staff were able to calm him down, listen to him and promised to pray for him and keep in touch with him whilst he was on duty. Helping return a young (13) runaway back to his home, he had turned up on the streets (40 minutes drive from home) looking for his elder brother who was in a Nightclub but refusing to have anything to do with his young sibling. Reconciling two friends who had fallen out and got into a vicious fight, with one needing hospitalisation.

My personal most memorable moment was kneeling cleaning the foot of Lady who had taken off her shoe and trodden on a broken bottle. As I removed bits of glass I sensed Jesus laughing fraternally at me saying “I said wash peoples feet, now you understand what I meant”! The lady looked at me and said “God bless you!” and I was able to reply “He just as done!”. We then spent some time chatting together over coffee about how God meets us in the love for and of others and how she had been a blessing to me.

A small selection of messages received. “Just want to say thanks Mark for tonight and if your free one day could I have a chat to you about religion like I said I got into after my Grandad passed away but working life and what not has been a bit of a distraction from it, id rather talk to you about it as well to be honest as you seem to put it across as a way I understand, yet again thanks for tonight was good to get to know you, really think what you do at the sanctuary is a great thing and if ever you need any more helpers don't hesitate to give me a message “

Lee

“Thanks for taking great care of my cousin last night you do a great job and make a lovely coffee, keep up the good work”

Suzie

“Thanks my knee is healing! i am very grateful for everything you guys did for me!!”

Tracy

“You guys are Angels”

Dave

“I think the people who work here do a good Job and it should be noticed”

Sam

“Thank you very much for being so helpful and caring. I hope you have the right help keep you going”

Jonathan

For more information please contact:-

Mark Berry

mail@mark-berry.co.uk

www.sanktuary.co.uk

01952 501824

07771925556