

VincentianConcern

St Vincent de Paul Society (England and Wales)

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A saintly encounter

Pilgrimage to Walsingham returns



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From our President



As I write this column for the last time I am overcome with gratitude. I am thankful to God for allowing me the opportunity to serve this wonderful Society over the past five years. In 2017 I was hesitant and daunted by the prospect; yet I recognised then (and I appreciate so much more now) that this was about teamwork and trusting in God's plan.

The SVP has existed since 1833 because it is this close network of charity that understands its calling to find, love and care for those suffering from the effects of poverty in all its forms. I have been lucky to be exposed to so many different aspects and facets of SVP work here, internationally and in our twinned countries, and I have been buoyed by the ability of our members and staff to strive to meet need in the greatest adversity. The bonds of friendship forged by our common mission are incredible. As Blessed Frédéric wrote: "...the strongest tie, the principle of a true friendship, is charity, and charity could not exist in the hearts of many without sweetening itself from outside. It is a fire that dies unless it is fed, and good works are the food of charity."

I am so very grateful to all of you for our shared friendship and for the inspiration and example you have shown me, even through some dark times. I would particularly like to thank all the members of National Council and the Board that I have had the privilege of working with; your dedication, commitment, knowledge and skill have served the Society so very well over the past years. I would also like to express my thanks to Elizabeth Palmer and to all the SVP staff who choose to adopt our charism and work tirelessly to help us fulfil our mission. And I thank my own Conference, St Joan of Arc Highbury, for showing me week by week why the SVP is such an incredible organisation, making a real difference in people's lives.

While I express my appreciation to you all I am reminded of John F Kennedy's words: "As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them." I will hold you all in my heart as I try to do just that.

It is time for change. Our Rule, that requires us to change people in leadership positions, is a valid one. It is time for new energy, new ideas, and new people to serve our Society and move it forward. I offer my heartfelt congratulations to Elaine Heyworth on her election as the next National President and I know you will offer her your full support, as I will, as she prepares to take up her role in November.

May God bless you in your SVP work and offer you His protection and guidance in your lives and may St Vincent continue to inspire you.

"The work of St Vincent de Paul never grows old: who would not wish to continue it?" (Bl. Frédéric Ozanam).

Yours in St Vincent and Blessed Frédéric,

Helen O'Shea, National President

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Welcome return for the Walsingham pilgrimage

The SVP National Pilgrimage to Walsingham, which included the Sacrament of the Sick, returned on 3 July after an absence of three years. Organised by East Anglia Central Council with help from the pilgrimage coordinator and staff at the shrine, the pilgrimage provided a welcome return to a much-loved event on the faith calendar.

Up to 600 people attended the pilgrimage in summer sunshine, a promising number considering the break due to Covid and the current high cost of fuel. In an atmosphere alive with friendship, support and love, SVP members described the day as “beautiful”, “a great success”, and “uplifting and well organised with dignity.”

SVP National President Helen O’Shea said: “It was a wonderful day, and fantastic to be able to share it with other SVP members in this very special place.”

In his inspiring homily Bishop Alan Hopes praised the SVP’s mission saying that “the message of the Gospel (love) must be lived before it is spoken.” At the pilgrimage SVP National President Helen O’Shea presented Bishop Alan with a relic of Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, which will be kept at the shrine.

During Mass two SVP members, Nigel Weale and Bob Thornton, who had recently passed away were remembered, and Stephen Giblin from the Peterborough Conference was congratulated on his 50 years’ service with the SVP.

Next year, the East Anglia Central Council aim to build on the success of the pilgrimage and look forward to welcoming more brothers and sisters in faith. The SVP Pilgrimage is on the first Sunday in July, so keep July 2, 2023 free on your calendar to join us next year.



The SVP National Pilgrimage to Walsingham returns after three years



Humanitarian operation vital for the people of Ukraine

As the Russian onslaught of Ukraine enters its sixth month, the beleaguered Ukrainian people continue to suffer unimaginable torment. The humanitarian aid operation in the decimated country includes the heroic actions of DePaul International, which the SVP is helping to support through the Ukraine Disaster Fund.



Viktoria, one of the volunteer cyclists

Displaced or refugee, they are still human beings

Mark McGreevy, President of the Depaul Group, says: "You'll hear the term IDP (internally displaced people) or refugee a lot, so it's easy to forget that what we are actually talking about is people. Men, women, children, parents, grandparents, friends. People who have lost everything and left their home, their family, their friends, their livelihoods, to seek safety."

DePaul International, which shares the same Vincentian values as the SVP, responded swiftly when the war broke out. Within days, their first aid trucks crossed the border from Slovakia into Ukraine. Their community contacts highlighted the greatest areas of need, and community networks of staff and volunteers operating in the country delivered.

Mark adds: "While never reckless, Vincentians are prepared to take risks. When the roads were too dangerous to travel, we used the rail network. When we learned that the elderly and disabled were still living in bombed out buildings and unable to access food, we

began using volunteer cyclists to reach them. When life-saving medical supplies were needed, we provided transport for 12,000 tourniquets and 5,000 medical kits. If people have no electricity, we provide food that doesn't need to be cooked."

Mark concludes: "To everyone who has already helped in some way, thank you! None of the above would have been possible without you and there is no way to adequately explain just how grateful we are. On behalf of Depaul International, Depaul Ukraine and the entire Depaul family, thank you for your continued support."

If you would like to support the SVP Ukraine Disaster Fund, please donate to our sister organisation Depaul International Emergency appeal.

As an individual and for conferences: Donate to the SVP Disaster Fund by scanning the QR Code.

Conferences can also donate to this fund by sending cheques made payable to St Vincent De Paul Society with 'SVP Disaster Fund' marked on the reverse.



Panto comes early to Leeds

St Vincent's Leeds has performed a pantomime production of *The Wizard of Osmondthorpe* to raise money for its community-based activities.

The centre's activities coordinator Tim Dawtry wrote, auditioned and produced their first ever annual community pantomime. The actors, made up of SVP centre staff, volunteers and centre visitors, performed to a full house who paid for seats on a pay as you feel basis. Ensuring this community event was truly inclusive, the St Vincent's Leeds provided transport for families who were unable to access public transport or who would find public transport difficult.

You can enjoy the panto on YouTube Munchkin Rap (*Wizard of Osmondthorpe*). **Scan the QR code to watch.**



"He's behind you..."



Blessed Frédéric canonisation takes a step forward

The Cause for the canonisation of our principal founder, Antoine-Frédéric Ozanam, took a significant step following the miraculous cure of an 18-month-old baby in Brazil in 1926. Fernando Ottoni contracted a virulent form of diphtheria but recovered. After investigation in 1995, this cure was designated a miracle through Frédéric's intercession, and Frédéric was beatified on 22 August 1997 by St Pope John Paul II in Notre Dame, Paris.

Excitement is developing regarding the next step, canonisation. An unexplained cure of a child has occurred in Brazil, and after investigation, the local diocese submitted their findings to the Vatican, hoping it will be deemed a miracle. Frédéric was born in 1813, the Society was founded in 1833 and he died in 1853. Could these historic "3s" be repeated by his canonisation in 2023?

Praying for Blessed Frédéric's intercession is not just about his canonisation. It unites members of the Vincentian family by praying for those sick or who are in need. Fr Charles Forbes OSB, a parish priest in Lancashire, started compiling a list of petitions dedicated to Frédéric's beatification and circulated them to the National Council for distribution to members. It was continued by Austin Fagan (National President 1992-1997), who had to give up circulating the cause in 2017 due to deteriorating eyesight.

A number of miracles have been suggested as being due to prayers to Frédéric's intercession, including one from England & Wales, following the remarkable recovery of the wife of a former president of the Society in the Sudan, who after being diagnosed with terminal cancer, was found to be clear of the disease.

The support our prayers give to desperate families is perhaps best illustrated by former president of Portsmouth CC, Louise Piper, who asked us to pray for her daughter who was 23 weeks pregnant. The baby had been diagnosed as having a duodenal atresia and complex congenital heart defects which would require surgery in the first few days of her life. Baby Pippa Louise was born on 6 August 2021 and almost immediately was operated on, spending the next three months in intensive care. After five major operations including open heart surgery, and after six months mainly in



Baby Pippa

the Paediatric Intensive Care Unit, she eventually left hospital in February this year. Louise wrote after her discharge: "Pippa definitely has an extended family. I believe in the power of prayer, and this little one has so many people worldwide praying for her. It's absolutely wonderful. PRAISE GOD."

Celebrate long service to the SVP

Many of our brothers and sisters in the SVP give a lifetime of service to others. Here is how you can order a long-service certificate and SVP medal.



Please contact membership@svp.org.uk with the recipient's name, length of service, Conference name and any roles that the member may have held. The certificate formally recognises the member for their service, but the wording can be adapted to your requirements. It is printed on card with the SVP stamp and comes with a letter of thanks from the SVP National President. There is no cost for the certificate.

Members may also wish to order a long-service medal, produced in Paris, to accompany this certificate at a cost of £20. The medals feature a picture of the young Frédéric Ozanam with the words "I would like to embrace the whole world in a network of charity" in French. On the reverse side are images of the Sorbonne Chapel and Notre Dame Cathedral.



Joan Wall, recently elected President of East Anglia Central Council

Vincentian Concern spoke to Joan about her involvement with the SVP and her ambitions for the future.

I come from a big Catholic family and am one of three siblings. My family always taught me to help other people in need whenever you can and I think that probably sowed the seed for my deciding to join the SVP.

I joined when the local Conference and Central Council President Roy Maine from our church did a pulpit appeal for new members. It really made me think and moved me to want to join. I saw it as an opportunity to extend my family's practice of helping people in need in our local community, through the church where I was an active member.

Being an SVP member has given me the confidence to reach out to other organisations and work in partnership with them. It's a wonderful feeling to be able to give people the opportunity to help others because they in turn feel good about themselves. I even convinced my husband Andy to join the SVP. He is not a catholic but helps so much by using our car to move furniture around and provide transport for people.

Looking to the future, I would like to affirm all the many committed people from all backgrounds and walks of life who are our members across East Anglia. They do such great work, and many have served as loyal, dedicated and hard-working members for many years. I would also like to see more young people joining the Society and I feel greater use of social media might encourage them to become involved and join. We need their energy and ideas, which help develop projects. A notable project is the temporary accommodation units we run in north Norfolk, which support families and individuals in such great need. I'm thrilled that we have appointed Jacinta Welsh as our Membership Support Officer and look forward to working with her to set up more Conferences, recruit more members and expand the age and skills-range of our members.

I have been inspired by the national website, the promotional literature and the member webinars, which I have found fascinating. The Knowledge Hub



Joan Wall

“ Being an SVP member has given me the confidence to reach out to other organisations and work in partnership with them. It's a wonderful feeling to be able to give people the opportunity to help others because they in turn feel good about themselves.”

is also a great resource, and I enjoyed the End of Life Companionship training programme. Vincentian Concern is a high-quality publication and I love seeing news of what other Conferences are doing. To anyone thinking of joining the SVP I would say DO IT and be ready to put forward your ideas as that's what we need more of, if we are to help more people in the future.

“To live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often.”

John Henry Newman

Without a doubt, we are living in times of unprecedented change. We've experienced the tragedies and disruptions of a global pandemic, we're seeing war in Europe with its fallout of rising prices and refugees; and climate change is bringing extreme weather and mass extinctions.

With change as its theme, our National Meeting will be held on August 5 and 6, giving us the chance to ask how the Society needs to evolve to respond to the changes we see around us. We begin the proceedings on Friday morning by looking at the foundations on which the SVP was established – the bedrock of scripture and tradition, Catholic Social Teaching and the Vincentian vocation – all reminders of our calling and of our unchanging faith.

A packed programme

After lunch, we begin to examine the world around us. We start by hearing from renowned experts in social policy. They'll bring us insights into why inequality in society is increasing, and how we could reimagine our responses to poverty.

We'll hear a report from Romania on how the SVP there is responding to the war in Ukraine. We'll then turn our attention to the pandemic and how we can emerge from it stronger. Our final session on the Friday will zero in on some of our projects which work closely with disenfranchised communities such as offenders and asylum seekers, and how we help give a voice to the voiceless.

On day two, we turn our attention to passing on the Vincentian charism to new audiences. We'll have sessions on recruiting new members, reaching young people and appealing to a more diverse audience. We'll also hear more from our Romanian twins. How to put our mission into action will be discussed in seminars about support centres, emergency accommodation and food clubs.

Join the Family

While the content of the programme promises to be dynamic, thought-provoking and packed with inspirational experts, this event is about much more than meetings. It's a chance to meet brothers and sisters from across the whole of England and Wales



The Hayes Conference Centre

Book now!

The National Meeting is being held in a comfortable conference centre in the beautiful Derbyshire countryside. With private rooms, delicious food, and excellent value for money, you won't regret you came! Check out the full programme on the members' area of the website. When the VC went to print, we still had a few places left. Book quickly on the website!



Where is it? The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Alfreton, Derbyshire DE55 1AU.

and exchange ideas and share experiences. It provides the opportunity to talk face to face with our National President, members of the Board and key staff members. There's an exhibition covering the vast range of services that we provide and a shop where you can pick up resources such as badges and prayer books. In short, you'll see the incredible breadth and depth of the SVP first-hand. Then there's the chance to pray together, take Mass together and eat together. Whether you've been a member for 40 years or are a relative newbie, there's no better way to feel part of the family.



Handing over the baton

The past five years have seen unprecedented challenges for the SVP, but also innovation, renewed focus and growth, and at the helm the Society's first female president, Helen O'Shea, whose term is coming to an end. In the wings is another leader, Elaine Heyworth. Vincentian Concern chats with two of the most capable figureheads in the charitable sector.

Helen O'Shea

Helen O'Shea's tenure as the SVP National President has been tumultuous to say the least. She has steered the Society through the Covid pandemic and its legacy of poverty and suffering, the heartbreaking unfolding reality of the government's Nationality and Borders Bill, and the daunting challenge of raising enough money to support the ever-increasing need in communities across England and Wales.

Under Helen's guidance, these challenges were not only squarely met, but were also turned into numerous opportunities to grow.

When asked about her achievements over the past five years, Helen says: "Covid was a massive challenge, but it also gave us a springboard, because it focussed the mind on the people we really need to help and what we have to do to help them. It pushed us in terms of technology, of being aware of our income sources, and in terms of

starting new support centres. Shops and fundraising did extremely well and were essential to our growth."

Helen also points to the challenge of maintaining the Society's membership during a pandemic: "Many members who had done amazing work throughout their lives at the SVP found Covid extremely difficult and couldn't continue, which made us look at expanding our cohort of Membership Support Officers (MSO) to see where we can recruit new members, look at different forms of membership, and how we can better involve people in our work."

The other big ticket items Helen singles out for special mention during her term of office include the expansion of St Vincent's centres and the aim of having a support centre in every Central Council, because "they meet need, galvanise support and create new life into a Central Council, and they also mean we are living out our mission in a palpable way. The thing which I love

about the support centres is that they have all come about through suggestions from members. They have full membership support, and I think that's important."

She also identifies entering the sphere of social justice as a significant milestone for the Society during her tenure. "I'm delighted that we have a social justice arm now. We have become the voice for the voiceless. I'm particularly proud of our Nationality and Borders Bill campaign, which sadly couldn't halt the government's progress on that issue, but nonetheless got people involved and raised many issues at a higher level."

Other achievements include the SVP becoming a Living Wage organization, boosting the youth provision and growing the SVP's communications and fundraising capability, laying the foundation stones for a more secure future.

However, it is the manner in which the Society coped, and in fact grew, throughout the Covid pandemic which Helen feels particularly proud of. She says: "The way we met need in ways we hadn't considered before was inspiring. Conferences ran food banks when they hadn't done that before, there were people dropping shopping off for vulnerable people, we were making phone calls to keep in touch when face-to-face visits weren't possible. I think the way we adapted and responded to Covid was remarkable really, and an absolute credit to members and staff."

So what does the future hold for Helen after five fabulous years at the SVP helm? "I'm going on holiday in the new year," she states jokingly, adding: "But I'm going to continue with my law reporting work, and I have become a trustee of DePaul International, so I intend to become more involved with their work."



Helen O'Shea



Elaine Heyworth

However, the SVP is never far from her thoughts. "I will have more time for the work of my own busy conference (St Joan of Arc Highbury)," she says. "I'm also going to be a legacy ambassador for the SVP, too."

We should all be grateful for Helen's passion for the SVP, her drive and her innate humanity.

Elaine Heyworth

The SVP's new National President-elect, Elaine Heyworth, is well known within Society circles, having headed up the Brentwood Central Council for many years.

Elaine, married with two daughters, has forged a successful career as the head of risk and insurance at communications regulator Ofcom, and brings a wealth of experience, drive and common sense to the SVP.

Elaine joined the SVP 12 years ago. She says: "I joined my first Conference in 2010 (North Springfield, Chelmsford, Essex), and within two weeks I was asked to take on the secretarial role. Following five years in that role, I then became Conference President, which I did for two years, before being asked to become the CC President for Brentwood."

During her term as CC President, she oversaw seismic changes which will surely have laid the foundations for future growth for the Society as a whole. "We opened St Vincent's Southend-on-Sea, which has been an inspiring community hub in Essex. Opening new support centres in every diocese is something I'm extremely keen on when I take up the post."

She continues: "In Brentwood, we had a new Membership Support Officer, which is also something that every CC should have. Our MSO brought in three new Conferences. From a sustainability point of view, I'm very keen to increase membership numbers."



Feature: New National President

While Covid presented a new raft of challenges, it actually helped Elaine and her team to gain new members. She explains: "A lot of people had time on their hands, and we were able to access them through our church networks. It also raised an awareness of the work that the SVP does across Brentwood, which is vital for growth."

Two years ago, Elaine took a Masters Degree in Voluntary Sector Management, a course recommended by SVP CEO Elizabeth Palmer. During this hugely busy time, Elaine also became the chair of the Twinning Committee, which needed support to move forward amid the tightening of regulations on overseas aid. Never a person to let time pressure prevent her achieving her aims, she is also an integral part of the International Twinning Commission, representing the UK, Europe and the Middle East, which she describes as "amazing."

Describing her decision to apply for the position of National President, Elaine explains: "I want to tell the whole world how fantastic we are. I want us to take our light from under the bushel and expose it for everyone to see."

While waiting in the wings, Elaine has definite aims for her presidential term. "I would like to push a big message of celebration and raise people's awareness of our work. I want people to get actively involved with their local newspapers and start telling everyone what it is we do. We have a great rapport with newspapers in Southend, and hardly a week goes by that we are not mentioned, so that needs to happen across England and Wales. A massive awareness campaign is right at the top of my wish list."

She continues: "The MSO (Membership Support Officer) expansion is also really important. I want every CC to have an MSO because I think they make a huge difference to the Society in terms of engagement with potential new members and existing ones."

Elaine also points to retail as a vital part of the Society's future. She says: "The money our retail stores bring in will give us the freedom to do the things that we need to do. Retail is just one part of our organisation which brings in money. Legacies, fundraising, social enterprise and our membership all contribute to the financial sustainability of the SVP."

Another high priority for Elaine is the Society's youth programme. She explains: "I definitely see younger people bringing energy and life into the Society."



St Vincent's Southend-on-Sea manager Daniel Cauchi with Elaine Heyworth

We have an ageing demographic, and bringing in a younger element is important for the Society's future."

Elaine continues: "Of course, social justice is also vital. We are in the grip of a cost of living crisis, and it's only going to get worse, which means the most vulnerable in our communities are really struggling. Our mission statement includes speaking out for the poor, and I think it's really important that we do that."

Elaine adds: "We do all this fabulous work to help people, but I want us to increase our influence at government level. I want us to elevate ourselves to a much higher level strategically, but without sacrificing what we do on the ground. The two areas are inextricably linked."

So, where does Elaine see the Society in five years' time? "I definitely want the Society to be more sustainable from a financial perspective. I don't want to have to worry about where the next pound is coming from," she says, adding: "I'd like our membership to be more stable, and I'd like a clear pathway for our younger members to transition into our regular Conferences."

Elaine has nothing but praise for her predecessor. She says: "As the first female SVP President, Helen gave me the confidence to put my name in the hat. She was so good at managing the teams, and she is so calm in a crisis. She has been inspirational to me taking on this role."

Of Helen, Elaine concludes: "I hope that I can do half the job that she's done, because I think she has been extraordinary."

Breaking Britain's High Poverty, High Inequality Cycle

Author Stewart Lansley will be a guest speaker at next month's National Meeting. His book *'The Richer, The Poorer, How Britain Enriched the Few and Failed the Poor, a 200-Year History'* looks at the history of poverty and inequality over the last 200 years and how we arrived at today's extreme income and wealth gaps.

In an interview with Vincentian Concern, Stewart gives us a preview of what he will cover in his session *'Britain's High Poverty, High Inequality Cycle'*.

Question: Why is poverty increasing in the UK?

While Britain is wealthier than ever before, the most vulnerable members of society have borne the brunt of a succession of post-2008 economic shocks, from deindustrialisation and the 2008 financial crash to rolling austerity and Covid-19. Hence today's extreme affluence alongside growing social deprivation. Britain is the second most unequal of rich nations (after the US), while the rate of child poverty has more than doubled in recent decades. Modern Britain hosts more food banks than branches of Greggs, while at the same time, one in three new cars bought in inner London in 2020 were SUVs.

Question: How do we tackle poverty?

Reducing poverty requires tackling income and wealth inequality. Relative poverty occurs when sections of

society have insufficient resources to afford a minimal acceptable contemporary living standard. The increased concentration of wealth at the top has too often come at the expense of lower wages and living standards and weaker social opportunities. As the prominent social thinker, art critic and philanthropist

John Ruskin argued in 1860, 'The art of making yourself rich is equally and necessarily the art of keeping your neighbour poor'.

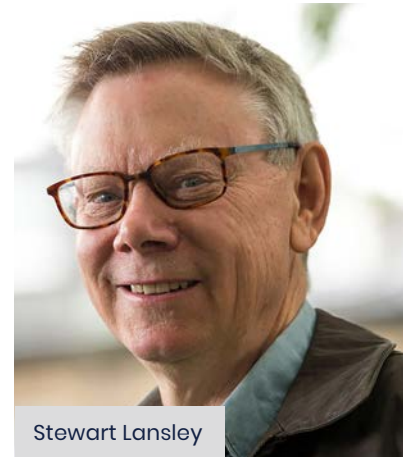
Question: Is 'levelling up' a credible solution?

Given the scale of Britain's deep-seated divisions, it's time to re-embrace the egalitarian goals that helped drive a more equal post-war society. These included a free health system, a firmer income floor, universal family allowances (later child benefit), a progressive tax system that bore most heavily on those with the broadest shoulders, and a new pact with business to accept greater social responsibility.

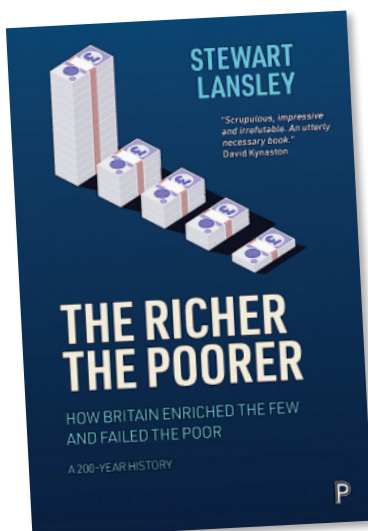
Reversing the trends of the last four decades requires a similar set of pro-equality measures for modern times that raise the income and wealth share of the poorest third, while lowering the share of those at the top. This year – the 80th anniversary of William Beveridge's 1942 blueprint for social reform – provides a golden opportunity for government to launch a programme of reform aimed at building the much promised fairer and more secure post-Covid society.

Question: What role can faith-based and other grassroots organisations like the SVP have in driving change?

There is a huge appetite for progressive change via public, 'bottom-up' campaigns as the recent Me Too, Black Lives Matter, Climate Change and Living Wage movements have shown. I think that the SVP and other grassroots organisations can play an important role in building pressure for the radical policies necessary to tackle the UK's growing poverty and inequality crisis. Without such pressure from across society, political leaders are much more likely to settle for a few uncontentious, but oversold, tweaks.



Stewart Lansley





The impact of the MSO

In the last edition of *Vincentian Concern*, we introduced the Membership Support Officer team. Since then, three new recruits have joined a team which has been making an impressive impact: Anita Lo for Portsmouth CC, Mike Green for Lancaster CC, and Katie Spreag for Wrexham CC.

A key focus of the MSO role is to support member recruitment and development under the guidance and direction of the Central Council (CC), which strategically plans to deploy this human resource to best effect within their patch. One method to start new Conferences and rejuvenate Conferences in need of fresh membership is to make appeals at Masses, with the number of such appeals increasing across England and Wales.

Potential new members contacted at an appeal are supported with a guided end-to-end process which takes them from the appeal and follow-up meeting through to the induction meetings, where they learn more about the SVP. They are helped through the application and DBS processes, and in addition, the MSO will offer face-to-face safeguarding training so that members have fulfilled their three-year training requirement from the outset.

As the face of National Office, each MSO is the go-to person for advice. The MSOs meet weekly as a team to share best practice and consider ways to deliver their service. The range of support the MSO can offer their CC members is diverse but reflects the SVP's mission to help those in need in whatever way it can. The information below will give you a flavour of what MSOs are doing.

Their primary duty is to support their Conferences in various ways, including reaching out for referrals, facilitating training for officers and members, ensuring news and information from National Office is effectively passed on, providing monthly newsletters, and contributing articles to the diocesan newspaper and website for members to read.

MSOs have been working with Conferences to help assist individuals, families and groups in need of support, including women supported by their local refuge, asylum seekers and refugees based in



Newly appointed MSO for East Anglia CC, Jacinta Welsh with CC President Joan Wall and CC Treasurer Jackie Roberts, at the national SVP pilgrimage in Walsingham

hotels, prisoners due for release into the community, beneficiaries who have moved to a different part of the country, and beneficiaries identified through SVP community shops and projects.

MSOs are also able to offer advice on accessing funding streams. Some MSOs are now advocates for Acts 435, the charity which provides crisis funding of up to £150 for beneficiaries in need. They are also promoters of the Lottery-funded Awards for All programme, where Conferences can bid for up to £10,000 for community projects. They also provide advice on accessing other grants, managing Gift Aid and securing legacies.

The MSOs meet on a regular basis with their Bishop and Deans to look at ways they can work effectively together, raising awareness of the SVP and collaborating in diocesan, deanery and parish initiatives. Effective relationships with the clergy are very important to the work of the SVP, so meeting with them and sharing our mission, vision and plans is essential.

MSOs have been tasked to work with their CC to help organise three events each in the coming year. The aim is to enhance the Vincentian experience of members, raise awareness of the Society and attract potential members. Such events include festivals, days of reflection, end of life companionship training events, Young Vincentian gatherings and SVP recruitment fairs.

The MSO is there to support the membership. You now have an idea what they can do. If you need their support, they would love to hear from you.

Developing our Young Vincentians is important, and with the support of the SVP Youth Team, MSOs have been active in engaging with primary schools, secondary schools and universities to start up new groups. The SVP does have some Conferences formed within schools, and the most recent school-based Conference is in Ebbw Vale.

Creating networks is an important aspect of MSO work, and many Conferences in their CC are now actively linked via an online platform to meet, pray and share practice together. Other networks created with charity partners include Caritas and CAFOD, diocesan justice and peace groups, and ecumenical partners, with MSOs looking to establish opportunities to work collaboratively with them. In one CC, the MSO is involved with the City Business Network and they have secured both financial support and free debt counselling for beneficiaries.

Serving the community

Holy Rood Conference member Kennedy Rodrigues has been elected as the local councillor for Oxhey in Watford.



Kennedy, who has been a dedicated SVP member for many years, is keen to promote the ethos and values of the SVP in his new role in the community. He also intends to remain a member of the Conference.



Serving a city for 35 years

Home. What does that mean? A roof over your head? Perhaps it represents safety and security? Or is it somewhere you feel able to rejuvenate and recharge your emotional batteries? The team at St Vincent's Furniture Store know it's all these things and so much more...

St Vincent's Furniture Store in Sheffield has many reasons to celebrate as it marks its 35th anniversary. Since 1987, the community hub has been providing furniture and household essentials to anyone in need, and in the process turning houses, flats and bedsits into welcoming homes for tens of thousands of people.

Back in 1987, the idea for a charity which provided furniture was just that – an idea. As with most of the SVP's community projects, it grew from need, or more specifically a request for furniture from someone who needed a sofa or a bed. That call was answered by parishioners of the Mother of God and St Wilfrid parish in the Hallam Diocese who rallied round.

Answering that initial call quickly took on a more organised form, and the basement of St Wilfrid's was requisitioned as the headquarters and storage unit for a fledgling project to provide furniture to the city's residents.

As demand increased, the project grew, and the confines of the basement could no longer provide the space needed for bulky items. At this point, the Sheffield diocese offered them the project's current base at 280 Queens Road at a peppercorn rent. It has now been there for 13 years.

The growing need

St Vincent's Furniture Store works with over 100 agencies around Sheffield, including Sheffield City Council departments, hostels, the NHS, housing associations and charities, all of whom make referrals to the SVP for support. However, for the St Vincent's team, the service they offer isn't limited to merely providing the requested items; it's a much more holistic approach. Centre manager Shannon Gabbert explains: "For 35 years, we have provided furniture, but we do so much more. Our drivers are all highly trained and will assess if our clients need further support such as food parcels, referrals to other services or other essential items."

Over the past 35 years, they have identified one item which is always in demand. Shannon says: "Beds. It's always beds. Singles, doubles, bunk beds – we never have enough. We sometimes have enough for a week, but they get snapped up quickly, so we are always looking for more beds."

The number of people who have been in temporary accommodation since the national lockdown ended, and an increasing number of asylum seekers, mean thousands have been placed in accommodation lacking any furniture. Even a simple chair is never just a chair to the St Vincent's team. It's always somewhere to sit and relax, talk and share thoughts. It's a conduit to a better life.

It's about people

Building St Vincent's Furniture Store into the inspiring project it is today has required the hard work, diligence and determination of thousands of people. From the parishioners who first answered that initial call for furniture to the current management committee, many of whom are long-standing SVP members, the project has become deeply rooted in the Sheffield community.

The city also has two St Vincent's shops, both of which contribute funds and support for the furniture store.

Over the years, there have been many people who have given years of service to the enterprise. From 2003, Ralph Dickins spent 18 years as the project's main fundraiser, raising an astonishing one million pounds. In his usual humble way, Ralph described his time at St Vincent's as "a privilege to be part of the journey."

Similarly, depot supervisor Stephen Young has been on the team for 16 years. Shannon says of her colleague: "He's extremely diligent and always out on the vans delivering furniture and making sure our clients have whatever they need."



The St Vincent's Sheffield furniture store at 280 Queens Road, Sheffield is officially opened



St Vincent's 30th group

The St Vincent's Furniture Store Management Committee and the team of volunteers are also invaluable to what the project has achieved. Shannon says: "We have an amazing team of volunteers who have been with us for many years. They are crucial to us delivering our service. They are simply wonderful."

A special place in the history of the St Vincent's Furniture Store is reserved for Monsignor Kilgannon of the Mother of God RC church who has been a huge supporter of the project. In fact, the centre has a room named in his honour. Shannon adds: "Father Kilgannon still comes to visit us at least once a fortnight and often brings £30 in coins in his pocket for us. He's a real shining light for the project and always will be."

What's next for St Vincent's Furniture Store?

Shannon says: "We want to expand our holistic approach by providing wrap-around care for our clients which may begin with a referral for furniture, but may also include providing food parcels and energy vouchers. That would mean that our clients could get everything they need from us."

They would also like to be more involved in social justice and campaigning. Shannon explains: "We are working on providing information and data on poverty levels in Sheffield and the type of help people need. It's about quantifying the need to back up our arguments at local council and government level. It's about challenging unfair policies and making change happen."

In an uncertain world, one thing is unequivocal: the need for centres such as St Vincent's Furniture Store is growing. However, while people are faced with four bare walls, it is more important than ever that we can turn that stark situation into a welcoming home where dignity can flourish.



Volunteers celebrated across the Society

Volunteers are at the very heart of the SVP. Alongside our 8000 members who give of themselves and their time to help others, the Society also has another army of volunteers who help in our offices, projects and shops.

This year, to celebrate National Volunteers' Week, a number of events and activities took place across the Society to mark the amazing support the SVP receives from its army of volunteers.

In each of the St Vincent's centres a celebration event took place, which ranged from afternoon tea to a full roast dinner. In Newcastle, the centre ran a social media campaign speaking each day to a volunteer about why they volunteered for the SVP and what volunteering meant to them.

In the St Vincent's Brighthouse shop, the team hosted a buffet to show the volunteers how special they are. Additionally, every SVP volunteer across the organisation received a certificate to thank them for their efforts.

Vicky Prout, National Volunteer Manager, said: "We are so proud of our team of volunteers. They help us deliver in every aspect of our work in the SVP and we certainly couldn't do what we do without them."



Get involved!

There are so many ways to get involved with volunteering at the SVP, including helping to sort and display items in the shops, teaching ESOL classes, befriending or even learning new kitchen skills. If you, or anyone you know, would like more information, please contact Vicky Prout on **01274 513045** or email **victoriap@svp.org.uk**

Feeding the community

The Society's community support projects are many and varied, but something they have in common is food provision. Offering food not only expresses the warmth of our welcome, but it is also a way to engage with those in the community who find it difficult to interact with other support services. It's a non-threatening way to invite people to trust the team which leads to them seeking more help later on.

For example, at St Vincent's Southend-on-Sea, the Kindness Kitchen serves hot meals five days a week, and the team have started a marketplace which means people can purchase 15 items for £3. The centre is lucky enough to have an allotment, managed by two amazing volunteers, which cultivates fresh produce for the food bank, and which also gives people an opportunity to work outside. Centre Manager Daniel Cauchi says: "We know the importance of food for our community and we offer a number of different approaches to ensure everyone's needs are met. Every day, people can come in to have something to eat or drink and they can access the services that we have at the centre."

St Vincent's Newcastle offers a number of food services, including the Vinnies weekly lunch club which is extremely popular. People sit at tables laid with tablecloths and cutlery where they are served by a team of volunteers, and they can enjoy a free three-course meal, including a wholesome soup, a hearty main and a delicious homemade dessert, all freshly made. Other services, such as dental services or haircuts, are offered around the time of the meal.



Offering food expresses the warmth of our welcome



St Catherine's School Mini Vinnies, Newcastle

Centre Manager Emma Bell says: "Our lunch club gives people the chance to come for a meal in a warm, welcoming environment. A chance to have a chat and a laugh while accessing services and support if needed."

Next door to St Vincent's Newcastle is a hostel managed by Frazer Hill, who collects surplus food from the local Co-Op three times a week. The offer is varied and can include vegetables, fruit and salad, cakes, occasionally meat, eggs and even pizza. A local bakery offers fresh bread. All this food is placed in the communal kitchen for the residents to help themselves. Residents either cook it straight away or put it in the fridge for a later date.

In Brighton, the centre welcomes older people and people with dementia to join in with daily activities such as chair exercises and art therapy. Meanwhile, their carers get an opportunity to chat and, of course, there is always a lunch after the session.

Our centres and depots are seeing an increasing need to offer emergency food parcels. In Cardiff, the Ely Bridge centre works in partnership with two local churches to provide essential food bags for up to 58 families a week. At the Wirral centre, there is also a food bank which operates five days a week. People coming to collect food can access a range of other services, including advice and advocacy. The teams delivering furniture from the Leeds and Sheffield depots now carry bags of tinned and dried food in the back of the vans which they can drop off with the household items.

Sadly, the need for help with food is growing. Every centre, regardless of their focus, is seeing an increase in demand. Any help from members is welcome, whether that be volunteering at your local centre, collecting food to donate, or even offering surplus vegetables from your allotment, it all helps us to help others.



New venture for Bradford and the SVP

Business Development Manager Ian O'Hara and Social Enterprise Manager Sarah Brill tell us about the launch of the new Social Enterprise Hub.

For many years, the SVP site at Rees Way Bradford has been a community hub, support centre, shop, as well as home to many support functions to the National Office.

The start of the financial year in April saw a new start for Bradford as the SVP launched its first social enterprise project from there.

What is a social enterprise?

Social Enterprises are businesses that are changing the world for the better. Much like traditional businesses, they aim to make a profit, but it's what they do with the profits which sets them apart. They reinvest them to create positive social change.

You will see social enterprises across all communities and on our high streets, from coffee shops and cinemas, to pubs and leisure centres, banks and bus companies.

By selling goods and services in the open market, a social enterprise creates employment and reinvests profits back into their business or into the local community, which in turn helps to tackle social problems, improve people's life chances, provide training and employment opportunities for those furthest from the market, support communities and preserve the environment.

Social enterprises exist in nearly every sector. Well known examples include The Big Issue and the Eden Project, but there are over 100,000 social enterprises throughout the country contributing £60 billion to the economy and employing two million people.

Recycling, training and reuse

Three strands run through our aims for the new venture: employability, training, and recycling and reuse.

We intend to develop a range of services and facilities under one roof, working with local members, staff and



volunteers as well as with local agencies and the local community to become an employability and training hub, providing training opportunities across the site. We aim to link up with a group called Progress2Work to introduce specific role and employability skills training, some of which could be accredited qualifications such as retail training in the shop, driver's mate training on the vans, and PAT test training in white goods and other electrical appliances in addition to the training in installation of white goods. Other training will include gardening and growing our own fruit, vegetables and herbs to use in healthy eating classes, and café training including food hygiene. And let's not forget the all-important customer service training.

We are planning to launch several workshops to help us reuse the resources we have which would otherwise be thrown away and probably end up in landfill.

Current workshop ideas are 'ReImagine', which includes the upcycling of donated goods through a 'Men and Sheds' group; 'ReCreate', which are classes and groups for craft making, such as knitting, sewing, card making and art; and 'ReBoot' classes for IT repairs and all things digital.

This new social enterprise project is an exciting venture for the SVP, and we hope that in the future we can use this template for more social enterprises under the SVP banner across England and Wales.

If you would like to know more, please email Ian O'Hara or Sarah Brill on iano@svp.org.uk or sarahb2@svp.org.uk

Alternatively, if you're in the Bradford area, why not drop in and let us make you one of our speciality coffees and a toastie?



South Sudan update

South Sudan, the world's newest country, has suffered from chronic instability since independence in 2011, including a brutal five-year civil war.

The political instability and regular breakdowns in the rule of law contribute to the difficulties in South Sudan, where large numbers of people still live in Internal Displaced Persons camps, employment rates are low and educational attainment performance is amongst the lowest in the world. All of which emphasises how essential the SVP-run projects in South Sudan are.

Our fundraising supports feeding centres of children up to the age of five, vocational training to provide much needed skills for the future, a Street Boys project and the St Vincent healthcare centre.

SVP Juba have been playing a significant role in supporting the authorities with vaccination programmes over the last few months and are currently setting up a new course at the vocational training centre which trains students to administer vaccinations and also to make minor repairs to the refrigeration units to ensure that the vaccines can continue to be safely stored before use.



Recent one-off legacy donations have enabled us to fund a small tractor for a self-sustaining agriculture project and to make a commitment towards rebuilding some of the St Vincent School classrooms. A relatively small amount of sterling goes a very long way in South Sudan. Please consider holding a fund-raising event to enable us to continue to support these essential projects and to support the SVP in Juba to build a better future for this war-torn country.



SVP members in Romania support refugees of war

Images of burned-out tanks, decimated infrastructure and shattered cities might lead news coverage of the war in Ukraine, but the true horror of the conflict is the devastating loss of life and the suffering of millions in this abominable theatre of pain. However, for every senseless act of violence there is an act of heroic bravery and compassion.

It is believed that there are only three or four Conferences in Ukraine, and they are not organised into a national structure, or affiliated to the Council General. SVP members are advised to donate to the Disaster Relief Fund, from which funds can then be transferred to the SVP in Romania, the only neighbouring country where the SVP England and Wales has direct Twinning links and where members are working on the ground to support refugees.

Members in England and Wales have been quick to donate funds, and since February, more than £41,000 had been collected and sent to the SVP in Romania, because it is not possible to transfer SVP funds to Ukraine. Members there are bringing essential supplies, food and fuel to refugee centres.

Meanwhile, Romania itself is one of the poorest countries in Europe and has 17 Conferences twinned with 27 in England and Wales. Conferences here have supported many projects there, including the following:



Since February, more than £41,000 has been collected and sent to the SVP in Romania

- Repairs to the Ozanam Centre in Miercurea Ciuc in eastern Transylvania, which provides a hot meal and after-school activities for children with special requirements
- New bathrooms and a laundry-room for a children's centre in Turt which offers boarding-school accommodation for 12 children and after-school educational support for an additional 20 children
- The Descent of the Holy Spirit Conference in Adjudenii, close to the Moldovan border, received £3,160 for a centre for children with special needs who receive little or no statutory support as state provision is very limited. The grant paid for therapy sessions and special teaching materials.



Support for Ukraine Refugees in the UK

A reminder that the Ukraine Disaster Fund is available to help support Ukrainian refugees now based in England and Wales. A grant may be needed for food, clothing, transport or any other general living requirements of an individual or family. The maximum grant is £500, and higher amounts will be considered on an individual basis.

Decisions are made by an Executive Sub-committee who discuss each application on its merits. Once approved, the funds are transferred as quickly as possible.

To apply, please contact Projects Manager Angela Howard on email AngleaH@svp.org.uk



Indian Scholarship Student update: Andrew Ashin

Andrew Ashin, from Chennai, was supported through the Indian SVP's Student Sponsorship programme and by local SVP members.

The Covid-19 pandemic not only affected his family and disrupted his studies but made it almost impossible for local SVP members to sustain their support. A member of the National Office fundraising team launched a personal fundraising campaign and raised £4,500 which enabled Andrew to complete his final year of studies and sit his exams. Just before Easter, he received the wonderful news that he had passed and is now a qualified doctor.

"For the rest of my life I will never forget the help and support I received from the SVP. I don't know what I would have done without it," he said.

Scan to watch the film.



News in brief...

Celebrating 50 years

On April 3, Our Lady and St Alphege's Conference in Bath celebrated its 50th anniversary.

The celebration began with a Mass of Thanksgiving for the SVP Conference at which members renewed their commitment to the SVP, and a letter from Bishop Declan was read by Father Alex. After the Mass, a celebration for the parish was held in the church hall featuring a cake baked specially for the event. SVP Director for Membership Jon Cornwall read a letter from the National President congratulating the Conference on their achievement. The day also recognised one of the Conference's founder members, Anne Creevy, who was presented with a long service certificate for her 50 years of service to the SVP.



Tea and new friends

The Our Lady of the Rosary Conference in Bexhill is celebrating after holding an afternoon tea on April 4 in St Martha's Church Hall, Little Common.

High winds and rain didn't deter 34 people who turned up, including a number from the parish and a large number from the local community. The afternoon proved to be a great success with people making new friends, and by the end of the afternoon, email addresses and phone numbers were being exchanged. The cakes were well received thanks to local Tesco Community Champion Tara, who agreed to sponsor the event by supplying all the cakes and refreshments. SVP volunteers worked extremely hard to make the afternoon such a success, which has resulted in the Afternoon Tea and Cake @3 becoming a regular monthly event with a different theme each time.





Digital poverty risks losing a generation's talents

Like food, warmth and safety, education is a basic need. It has the power to lift an individual out of poverty, to empower, to build self-esteem, and to open doors to a whole new world of possibilities. It's vital. That's why, in an age of incredible technological advances, digital poverty is completely unacceptable.

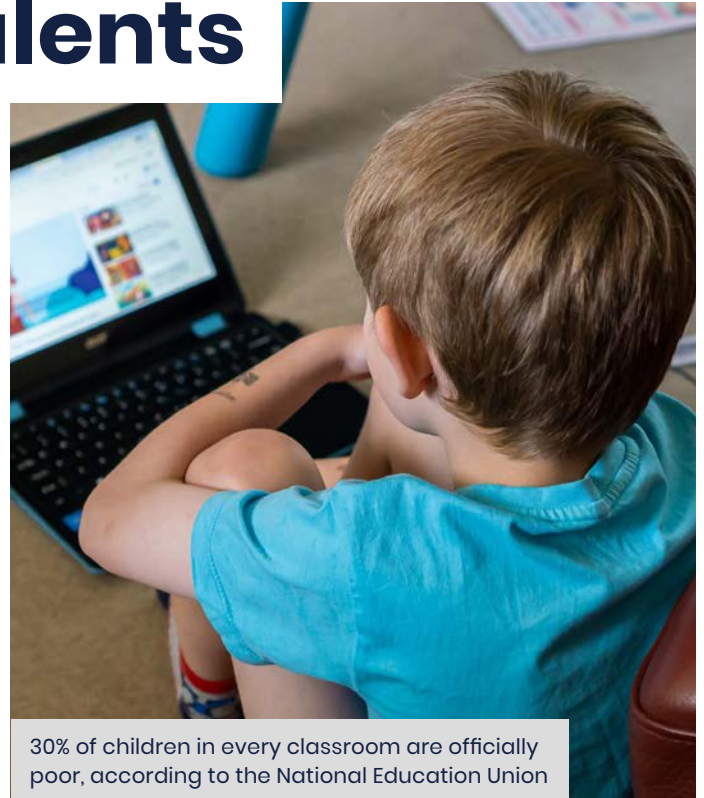
So much of the current curriculum for children and young people is built around computers, iPads, smartphones and cloud-based resources. Additionally, digital media in education doesn't stop when the home time bell rings; it actually takes on a greater importance for homework, research and further learning outside the classroom.

Over the past two years living with the pandemic, the reliance on technology for education has become paramount. However, the gulf between those who have access to digital resources and those who haven't has grown, throwing a generation backwards in educational terms. The tragedy is that those who haven't been able to continue to learn from home during periods of lockdown have drifted into an educational abyss with thousands lost from view and left behind.

Children and young people whose families and guardians cannot afford to buy the basic hardware of the digital age find themselves at a huge disadvantage compared to those who can meet this expense. This imbalance is exacerbated by the fact that most of those who suffer from digital poverty are themselves likely to live in impoverished households, further rooting families and individuals in a cycle of poverty from which it is extremely difficult to escape.

Unless this hidden issue isn't addressed, society will continue to marginalise people from poorer backgrounds and ignore the latent talents of hundreds of thousands of young people.

The National Education Union states that "poverty harms children's physical health and mental well-being, and this undermines their ability to learn in lots of different ways," adding that "the UK is one of the world's



30% of children in every classroom are officially poor, according to the National Education Union

richest economies, but 4.3 million children and young people are growing up trapped in poverty. This means 30% of children, or nine pupils in every classroom of 30 pupils, are officially poor."

These links between education, mental health and poverty clearly spell out that children and young people need and deserve the right to a decent education from a fit-for-purpose system, and digital poverty should be addressed as a matter of urgency.

The SVP's social policy work in this area aims to help government and local authorities identify which children are in digital poverty, and gather information, case studies and trends, which can be used to campaign for reform in this area.

It is vital that the government properly finances the use of digital technology in educational establishments, particularly for those who don't have the resources to meet this expense. Only then, will society be able to start on the path to a just and egalitarian education system where talent and determination, and not income, dictates success.

Members help Afghans in limbo

Michael Coyle from The Good Shepherd Conference, Telford tells us about their work with Afghan families trapped in hotels.

SVP members in Telford and Shrewsbury are supporting Afghan families who have been brought from the clutches of the Taliban to safety in the UK.

The families are here under one of two schemes aimed at helping them to settle and integrate into UK society, and now, partly because of the situation in Ukraine, their plight is in danger of being forgotten.

Around 200 people including parents, grandparents and children, have now spent almost a year housed in hotels in Telford, with whole families crammed into a single hotel bedroom.

Being cooped up for so long has not been easy for them, and the four Conferences in Telford and Shrewsbury are doing their utmost to support them, working with the local council and another local charity.

The Good Shepherd Conference became involved in August last year, and Cathedral, St Patrick's, and Our Lady's Conferences joined in November. Between them, they have provided dozens of mobile phones, beard trimmers, suitcases, pushchairs, shopping



centre vouchers, clothing, cosmetics, and more. They joined forces with volunteers from Shropshire Supports Refugees to provide a successful, well-attended ESOL programme, with sessions taking place most weekdays. Conference members have also arranged social events to get the families out of the hotel for a bit of fun, including a day at the seaside.

With the help of National Office, members have also raised awareness of the plight of family members left behind in Afghanistan who are still in mortal danger as a consequence of supporting the UK Embassy and our armed forces. The SVP has also lobbied MPs, including meeting the local MP at the hotel.

The SVP urges halting of proposed Rwanda flights

The SVP is reiterating its opposition to the government's plan to send asylum seekers to Rwanda.

The SVP is urging the government to abandon its Migration and Economic Development Partnership with Rwanda and "do the right thing" by creating a compassionate and fair asylum system which treats people as humans. Dispatching people who need safety and deserve dignity to detention centres in a country 4,000 miles away leaves them isolated, separated from family and in limbo about their future.

The Home Secretary's refusal to discontinue the inhumane policy of sending already traumatised asylum seekers to a country whose track record on human rights is far from untarnished is a great cause for concern.

The SVP believes that the UK should embed a culture of welcome to people fleeing their homeland to reach safety on our shores. Only then will the UK be seen internationally as an enlightened, democratic and egalitarian nation.





Forget-me-not raises asylum seeker awareness

The SVP's dynamic Young Vincentians have been raising awareness of the problems facing refugees and asylum seekers.

Our young people have a well-deserved reputation for getting actively involved in fundraising and campaigning on issues from poverty and homelessness to loneliness. Using a raft of superb educational materials provided by the Youth SVP team under the *Forget-me-not* campaign banner, the children and young people learned about the fears and aspirations of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK.

The campaign was timed to coincide with Lent and featured immersive activities, spirituality and action in the form of writing to their MPs on the issue.

Among the topics our youngest group of 7–11-year-olds explored were surviving on a daily budget of just £5.39, the restrictions placed on asylum seekers in terms of working and where they live, and the heartbreaking wait to find out if they can remain in the country. The children also discovered an empathy with the children of refugees and asylum seekers, exploring how different experiences of life are for their brothers and sisters from other countries who are seeking safety in the UK. They expressed their feelings through art, creative writing and discussion groups, revealing a true Vincentian compassion for this vulnerable group of individuals.

The campaign was underpinned by an exploration and understanding of the spirituality of the period of Lent, with prayers for the safety and security of refugees and asylum seekers accompanying the sessions.

Forget-me-not around the country

Year 4 Mini Vinnies at **St Godric's Catholic Primary School** in Durham took part in the SVP Forget-me-not Lenten Reconciliation Service. Their beautiful prayers for all refugees and asylum seekers were added to a colourful field of forget-me-nots, with a special focus on the people from Ukraine.

Meanwhile, **St Matthew's RC Primary School** in Jarrow welcomed Michael, their Young Vincentian Development Officer (YVDO), to commission the Mini Vinnies group at the school. The Mini Vinnies celebrated



The Forget-me-not campaign helped children to understand what it means to be a refugee or asylum seeker

by revealing their beautiful Mini Vinnies noticeboard and their Forget-me-not campaign flower artwork.

In Kingston-upon-Hull, **Endsleigh Holy Child VC Academy** held a reconciliation service, after which the children wrote prayers for those who have had to leave their homes to move to safety. The Mini Vinnies created a stunning cross of forget-me-nots to ensure that nobody would be forgotten.

The Mini Vinnies at **St Edward's Catholic Church** in Windsor put their faith into action by heading up two drives for items to help those most in need in Ukraine. Their truckload of donations was packed up and delivered to a children's foundation in the war-torn country.

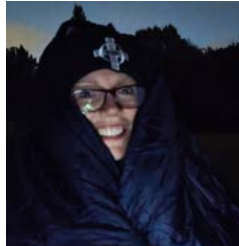
In Wednesbury, Mini Vinnies from **St Mary's Catholic Primary** School raised over £300 for Ukraine by dressing up in blue and yellow, creating a prayer chain and recording a song. Money raised by the Mini Vinnies went to the Disasters Emergency Committee Ukraine appeal.

Secondary schools also found the Forget-me-not campaign engaging for their young people. "This was a great resource," said one teacher, while another added: "I used it with my Young Vincentians group, and then I used it with the whole of Year 7 for their reconciliation services in the chapel. We got our MP into school, and students campaigned for the government to change the (Nationality and Borders) Bill."

Big summer sleep

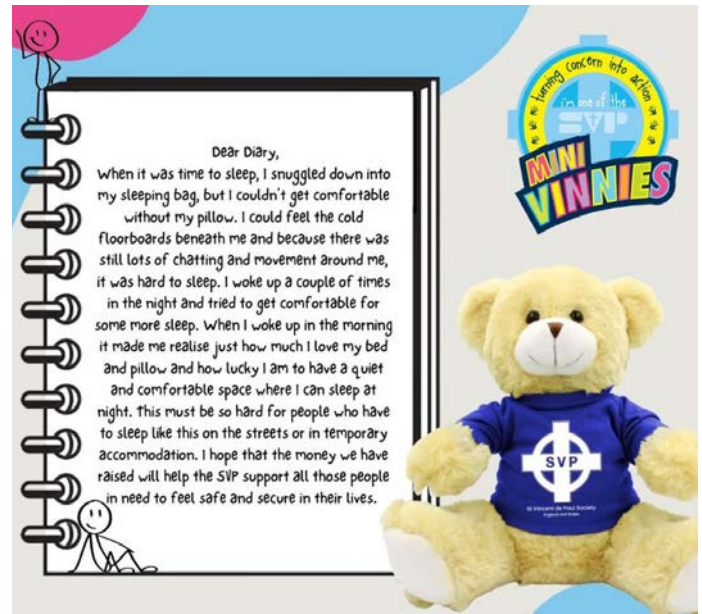
Sarah Barber, Director of Young Vincentians and Youth Services explains how Young Vincentians show solidarity with those experiencing homelessness.

This summer, the SVP's Summer Sleep event has been engaging with our children and young people to raise awareness of the issues surrounding homelessness in England and Wales.



Across the country, many are sleeping rough, fleeing from danger, are stuck in hostels or bed and breakfasts or end up sofa surfing.

To show solidarity with those who lack a secure place they can call home, young people in schools and parishes across England and Wales have been sleeping out under the stars, spending the night in school or parish halls or individually being sponsored to sleep on the floor at home. This gives them a better understanding of what thousands of people experience on a nightly basis and gives them the opportunity to raise funds to help out.



Introducing... Vinnie Bear

Sue Ellis, one of our Young Vincentian Development Officers, gifted us with 50 Vinnie Bears (from money earned on sales of her book, 'Thank God for Mass'). These bears are available for primary school groups that commit to raising at least £150 for the SVP Summer Sleep.

The Young Vincentian Team have provided age-appropriate resources including night prayers and morning prayers, a film sharing the experience of a sister whose brother began to sleep rough, a Vinnie-pack activity, and an art activity called Candle of Hope. Vinnie Bear also leads the Mini Vinnies through a diary activity based around the SVP Summer Sleep.

Mini Vinnies honoured

The Mini Vinnies at Our lady and St Kenelm Catholic Primary School in Halesowen have been presented with a Certificate of Merit in the Young Active Citizen Awards 2021 by her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of the County of the West Midlands.

The prestigious award was presented to them at a school assembly on 17 June by Deputy Lieutenant Elizabeth Foster in recognition of all their charitable activities.

Commenting on the award, Headteacher Mrs Christine Finnegan said: "We are so proud of our Mini Vinnies for all that they have done over the years to receive such an accolade. Well done each and every one of you."

Mike Weaver, President of the local Conference, said: "We are thrilled by the excellent example set by our young people. We trust their pursuit of the Vincentian mission to turn concern into action will stay with them forever."





SVP Summer Raffle promises big prizes

The chance to win big prizes and help to raise much needed funds and heighten awareness of the Society has arrived in the shape of the SVP Summer Raffle.

This year, you have the chance to win the £5,000 top prize, the £1,000 runner-up prize, and 15 additional £100 prizes. As well as potential cash prizes, Conferences will receive 50% of the money raised in ticket sales, net of costs, to support work in your local community. Tickets are £1 each or £5 for a book of five. Raffle tickets will be available from mid-June to mid-September, and the draw will be held at St Vincent's Bradford on the Feast Day of St Vincent de Paul, Tuesday 27 September 2022, when the 17 lucky winners will be announced.

In a change to previous raffles, the SVP Summer Raffle has been opened up to St Vincent's centres to sell tickets, which means vital extra funds for the great work undertaken at SVP community hubs.

Raffle tickets and posters will be sent to over 800 Conferences and nine support centres, and raffle tickets will also be available to purchase on the Fundraising team's stand at the National Meeting on 5-6 August.

The main contact for Conferences interested in supporting the SVP Summer Raffle is Liv Stott, who is being supported by volunteer raffle coordinator Ian



Vipond, who happens to be Liv's father. Please either email fundraising@svp.org.uk or call Liv on **07593 384429**.

Ticket stubs, unsold tickets, return forms and cheques must reach the national office by **Wednesday 14 September 2022**. Please note that this year's raffle is being administered by the National Office at SVP England and Wales, Allenby House, Rees Way, Bradford, BD3 0LH.

And remember that every SVP Summer Raffle ticket sold is another step towards helping people who need it most.



Are you feeling lucky?

What would you do with £25,000? The SVP Weekly Lottery is now live with a chance to win big prizes while helping to fight poverty in all its forms.

Playing the SVP Weekly Lottery is simple: just visit <https://svp.affinitylottery.org.uk> to enter. You can play from as little as £1 per line per week by Direct Debit to win the top prize of £25,000 by matching six numbers, £1,000 for matching five out of six numbers, or a runners-up prize of £300. The lottery runs every Friday, and you can choose your own lucky numbers or play with a lucky dip and allow fate to decide.

The SVP Lottery offers players the chance to win big cash prizes without any risk or major expense for the Society, with over 50% of the ticket price going back to the SVP.

Playing the SVP Weekly Lottery means you will be at the heart of making a positive change in the lives of others, and you will become a vital part of the SVP's mission to tackle the causes of poverty. So, are you feeling lucky?



Rise to the Challenge appeal update

The appeal to raise £10m to support the Board of Trustees' vision for the Society has almost reached half-way point.

The support received to date through legacies, four-year pledges and single gifts has enabled vital work to get underway. For example:

- Increased support for Conferences through Membership Development Officers
- Establishment of the Knowledge Hub and training programme for members
- Improved support for beneficiaries through a dedicated Beneficiary Support Officer
- Opened three new centres and reimagined Bradford as a social enterprise hub
- Expansion and growth of our Young Vincentians programme
- Increased capacity for digital fundraising and support for Conference fundraising
- Implementation of a Society-wide digital transformation programme



- Establishment of a social justice and campaigns programme which has already helped position the SVP as an authoritative voice in this field.

Fundraising for the campaign continues, and a public launch is being planned for 2023.



Every act of kindness creates a ripple

Have you ever tossed a pebble into a lake and watched the ripples spread outward in concentric circles? Your acts of kindness are like those ripples, impacting others in unforeseen ways.

When the SVP organised a foodbank, Darren, who'd lost his job due to the pandemic, gratefully received the help it provided to tide him over. He then decided to volunteer there, which boosted his self-esteem. Consequently, he treated his family better.

Stories like this have been repeated countless times since 1833, when the Society first decided to 'do a little good'. More often than not, we do not know the impact our kindness has down the line, but we can be sure the ripple effect is multiplying our efforts.

How would you like to create more ripples that will continue to spread long after you've gone? A gift in your will is like a stone dropped in a pond. Whether the stone be large or small, it creates ripples which spread out and out, impacting the lives of people you've never met.



In partnership with Your Catholic Legacy (YCL), the SVP provides a free will-writing service for members. We'll send you a registration package which explains how the service operates and provides details of between two and six law firms near you. This is a wonderful opportunity to benefit the future work of the SVP no matter how small or great your gift could be.

To request the free service or speak to someone about leaving a gift in your will, contact our Legacy Manager on **0207 703 3030**, or email legacies@svp.org.uk.



SVP webinars

When the pandemic began, many of us very quickly had to get used to conducting meetings online. Around this time, the SVP launched regular **Thursday evening webinars – online meetings – to provide an opportunity for SVP members to hear about and discuss a range of topics and stories and connect with others across the country.**

On the first Thursday of each month, we typically hear from a speaker external to the SVP, and on the third Thursday, we hear from our fellow members.

In March we heard from popular Catholic speaker David Wells. In April we were joined by the Campaign to End Loneliness. In May we heard from the people behind Listening Works, a national support line for care leavers aged 18-30. These webinars have prompted fruitful dialogue and keen discussion of potential collaborations.

More speakers are lined up for August and September, notably:

- **29 September: Webinar with the International President General of the SVP**

We have the privilege of welcoming Renato Lima de Oliveira, International President General of the SVP (pictured), who will reflect on the work and achievements of the SVP International Council General.



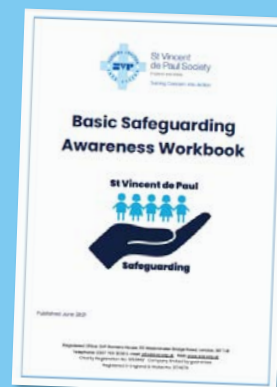
The webinars take place on the online meeting platform Zoom. Joining the meeting is as simple as clicking on a link and entering your details.

Webinars are recorded, and these videos can be found in the SVP Knowledge Hub (<https://membersknowledgehub.svp.org.uk>).

Contact brianr@svp.org.uk for more information and help with joining.

Safeguarding training

Safeguarding is a key part of the Vincentian ethos, and our online training is tailored to actual Conference activities. As a full member, you are required to complete safeguarding training through any of the following methods:



- **Online training** – a live 1.5-hour session online. You can join as an individual or as a group around one device. Take a look on the Knowledge Hub for our upcoming sessions (<https://membersknowledgehub.svp.org.uk>)
- **Paper workbook** – to be completed in a group with other members, one of whom has already completed their own safeguarding training.
- **Educare** – an online course that can be completed in your own time and at your own pace.
- **Other** – already completed adult safeguarding training in the last 3 years elsewhere? Let us know so we can update your profile.

Any questions, just get in touch at safeguarding@svp.org.uk.

“I thoroughly enjoyed it and my eyes have been opened wide!”





SVP Digital Champions community launched

We are delighted to announce the launch of the SVP Digital Champions community, a network of over 23 colleagues who will support members, community support centres and projects, shops, camps, volunteers and youth.

As we all use more digital tools and channels, our Digital Champions will be on hand to assist and inspire teams and Conferences who want to kickstart or ramp up their digital presence.

Over the coming months, the communications team will be hosting training sessions on managing websites, social media, branding and more. With the backup of recorded sessions and an online community to encourage continued learning and knowledge sharing, we build continuity for future champions.

Becoming a Digital Champion is a great way to support others with your skills. You can expect to receive:

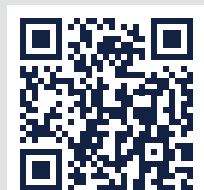
- Peer to peer support
- Increased confidence in basic digital skills
- Access to mentor support
- Improved communications channel

- The chance to host your own training webinars
- Simple tools and resources to support your team and the SVP

If you would like to get involved or learn more, please get in touch with Clare Hughes at clareh@svp.org.uk.

Members Training Catalogue

For the full webinar schedule for the coming months, and for information about all upcoming training sessions, go to the new Members Training Catalogue on this link <https://tinyurl.com/SVP-training-catalogue> or scan the QR code.





Part of our past, at the heart of our present

After dodging it for over 2 years I have finally fallen foul of Covid and am writing this in splendid isolation in my spare bedroom. I have been fortunate, and it has not been too bad. Now I am just eager to escape the confines of my room and to pass the time of day with someone in idle chit chat!

I even leaned out of the window yesterday, just to catch a neighbour passing by and exchange a few words! I can't honestly say I've been lonely as my husband has been working in the room next door and I've been on plenty of work zoom calls, but to be confined in one room is just stifling – even if only for 5 days. One takes both health and liberty for granted until they are taken away.

The other week, I was chatting with a lady in Walsingham at the Society pilgrimage of the sick. It turned out that she was not with the Society, indeed that she was not even a Roman catholic, but that she lived locally and often visited the shrine. She explained that she had a chronic and debilitating illness and that she had dropped by specifically to attend the SVP pilgrimage as she had been given a statue of St Louise de Marillac which gave her great comfort and she knew of her association with St Vincent.

She felt that St Louise was a saint who understood the suffering of the sick and was therefore relatable to her. Similarly at another recent meeting I met someone who was going to start an SVP conference in her parish and become a member, having already been involved with the Vincentian family in other ways for some time. She told me that she felt increasingly drawn to St Vincent and that he was "her saint."

In this edition of the VC we read about the path to canonisation of our founder blessed Frédéric Ozanam. There are many Vincentian saints, the well known and the lesser known. Over the last few weeks I have been powerfully reminded through the people I have met that they are not just a part of our past but that our Vincentian saints are at the heart of our present too, comforting, guiding and calling us to action.



Elizabeth Palmer, CEO

David Young's Charity

The trustees of the David Young's Charity (DYC) are aware of the work that the Society undertakes at all levels. Some cases need more support than normal and even after District Council and Central Council assistance, there may be a shortfall. As a separate registered charity, we can try to assist any member of the Society who may have fallen on hard times. Any applications for grants must be sent with any other documentation that would prove helpful to the Trustees for consideration.

The reply should be received within 30 days. As a Special Work of the Society, we are able to receive donations from Conferences, Councils and individual members. We are most grateful for those received in the past and it is helpful for administrative purposes to send cheques made out to the David Young's Charity.

The trustees of the SVP have approved support of DYC. For further information, an application form or any guidance please contact:

The Trustees of the David Young's Charity, Romero House, 55 Westminster Bridge Road, London, SE1 7JB.

Visit the David Young's Charity website:

www.davidyoungscharity.co.uk or email **trustees@davidyoungscharity.co.uk**

Registered Charity Number: 238877

CHAS Catholic Housing Aid Society

CHAS (West London) was established in 1965 with the aim to assist anyone with a financial housing problem. For instance, the Trustees would consider supporting someone with rent arrears who may be in danger of being evicted. However, we are a 'specialised fund' and cannot make grants for more general purposes. The fund works closely with the St Vincent de Paul Society throughout England and Wales and, where applications are made through the SVP, we would expect the SVP to be committed to the particular case they are submitting with time and appropriate funds. Although £250 is a general amount for a grant, consideration is given to the circumstances of each case and the amount is varied accordingly.

An application form can be downloaded from **www.chas-uk.org** or obtained from Noreen Villiers by post, **46 Bradley Road, London SE19 3NS**, or email at **noreenvilliers@AOL.com**.

Please submit the application to Noreen Villiers with as much supporting detail and documentation as possible in order to receive the full consideration of the Trustees.

Registered Charity Number: 241225

Remembering those we have lost

With deepest regret we announce the deaths of the following valued members.

Joyce Anderson, St Gabriel's Ormesby

Middlesbrough and Redcar: Joyce died aged 74 after 40 years of service to the people of her diocese. She attended Conference weekly meetings in both parishes in addition to District Council meetings. She was Conference President and a training officer for the Central Council in the Middlesbrough diocese.

Mary Bradley, Our Lady of Sorrows, Peckham: Much loved Conference member Mary passed away in May. She will be greatly missed.

Peter Cooke, St Gerard's Conference, Knowle,

Bristol: Peter was a long-standing member of the SVP at St Gerard's Conference and Our Lady, Comfort of the Afflicted Conference, who was awarded a certificate and medal from the SVP National Office in 2014 to celebrate his 50 years of service. Peter passed away very peacefully surrounded by his family on May 14 at the age of 80.

James Joseph Foley, Our Lady Of The Sacred Heart,

Herne Bay: James Foley has died aged 69. He was a member of Herne Bay Conference for over two years and served as Treasurer. During that period James made a significant impact in all areas, including financial matters, through his innovative thinking and practices. James was a humorous, kind and generous member who was a joy to work with.

Peter Gallagher, St Bernadette's, Nunthorpe,

Middlesbrough: Peter passed away at the age of 90 in January. Along with his wife Marie, who died in 2008, he was a kind and dedicated member of St Bernadette's Conference for over 20 years, serving as Treasurer for much of that time. He was a great conversationalist and an intelligent and well-travelled man with a keen interest in football. May he and Marie rest in peace.

Pat Kelly, St Wulstan's, Stourport-on-Severn,

Worcestershire: Much loved St Wulstan's Conference member Pat sadly died after a long illness. Her husband Greg died in 2020 and had been a long-standing Conference member holding the roles of President and Secretary. They are both greatly missed.



About the SVP



2022 Dates for the diary

National Meeting

Friday 5 - Saturday 6 August 2022

The Hayes Christian Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire. Bookings open in December via our website (or we can email you a booking form).

Board Meetings

Friday 14 October 2022 London

Friday 25 November 2022 (am) Via Zoom

National Council Meetings

Friday 25 November 2022 (pm) AGM Via Zoom

Saturday 7 January 2023 Leeds

Committee Meetings

Committees should hold their meetings at least three weeks before the Board meeting dates in order to allow enough time to prepare any papers to be submitted to National Office by the deadline. Board papers will be sent out two weeks in advance of the Board meeting.

Please pass it on...

Once you have read your copy of the Vincentian Concern please feel free to pass it on so that others in your local community can learn more about the SVP.

The St Vincent de Paul Society (SVP) is an international Christian voluntary organisation dedicated to tackling poverty and disadvantage by providing practical assistance to people in need - irrespective of ideology, faith, ethnicity, age or gender.

The Society is a lay organisation initially formed in Paris in 1833 by Blessed Frédéric Ozanam and his companions, and active in England and Wales since 1844. Placed under the Patronage of St Vincent de Paul, it is inspired by his thinking and works. It seeks, in the spirit of justice and charity, to help those who are suffering the effects of poverty in whatever form. Works include visiting the lonely, soup runs, foodbanks, furniture shops and charity shops in areas of deprivation, visiting the sick, giving grants to those in need, debt counselling, and assisting refugees and asylum seekers. Last year, SVP members made over 300,000 visits to families and individuals in need. Working face to face with the people we seek to help, SVP members develop lasting relationships with the people they serve, and gain a rare insight into the lives of the people they help.

Share your stories

We want to hear from you so please share your inspiring stories about the work of your conference.

The next deadline to submit content for the Vincentian Concern is **30th September, 2022**. Articles for inclusion in the magazine should be emailed to Joseph Adjei at **comms@svp.org.uk**. Please include a high resolution image with your article.

Vincentian Concern is an official publication of the St Vincent de Paul Society England and Wales.



**St Vincent
de Paul Society**

England and Wales

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