

# VincentianConcern



St Vincent de Paul Society (England and Wales)

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[svp.org.uk](http://svp.org.uk)



## Making a Difference



Inside this edition

Strategic Planning • The Giving Tree • The little child and the starfish

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# Welcome

## Welcome to your Spring Vincentian Concern.

This time of year is often associated with new beginnings and some improvement in the weather. While we hope the latter may arrive by the time of publication, the content and design of this edition and the Members Report reflect the former. As our new Board of Trustees settles in to its five-year term, you can read about their new vision for the Society and exciting plans for the future, which are outlined on pages 5-7.

You will notice that, after many years, the magazine and Members Annual Report have a new look. As today's world of communications becomes ever more crowded and fragmented, a consistent image is increasingly vital to ensuring our work is known, our important message can be heard above the "noise" and that prospective new members see how the Society is evolving in the modern world. The new look is therefore designed to be consistent with our new website and social media channels. Launched in June of last year after much research and preparation, the website acts as a vital first point of contact with the Society. It is also an important public window on our work and values, and combined with our social media channels, enables us to maintain a conversation with a growing network of people who are interested in our work.

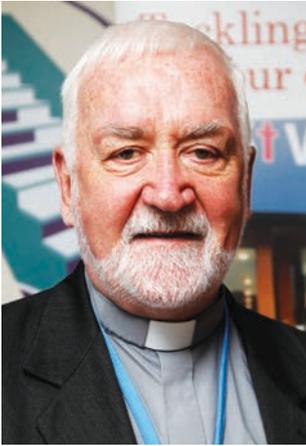
As with anything new, you may welcome and embrace the new design straightaway, or you may take a little while to adjust to it. Whichever applies to you, be assured that the unique mix of high quality, erudite and light-hearted content continues as ever, and all the traditional features and sections can still be found in these pages.

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# Jesus lives and is with us



**It all seemed to happen so quickly, a triumphant entry into Jerusalem, palm branches and cloaks spread on the dusty road before him, dancing and roars of ringing approval.**

Who could have imagined that a couple of days later – night time arrest, a mock trial followed by torture and

a shameful criminal execution. Something elemental was happening; St. Luke tells us 'It was about noon... and darkness came over all the land' (Lk.23:44). Dark at midday where the sun usually shines relentlessly. But the real darkness was in the hearts of the little group of disciples. Darkness and despair enveloped them, they were filled with fear and wanted to hide away. Some were so disillusioned seeing everything they hoped for lost and destroyed, they simply wanted to get away from it all and fled.

Mary his mother, the most deeply hurt of all, had stood beneath the cross and saw and heard the whole obscene event – yet she managed to gather much of the group, and held them together in prayer and a new calm.




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**“ Jesus is risen, and is with us. As Vincentians we are called to serve God by loving and serving him in those who are in need. Reach out to them in His name, and with His power.**

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Then, before dawn on the Third Day while others were still gathered in the locked upper-room, Mary of Magdala, out of whom St. Mark says Jesus had driven seven demons, was making her way to the tomb in which Jesus had been buried. She had witnessed the horror of Golgotha. Now filled with a restless love for Jesus, she wanted to do all she could to undo the shameful things that had been done to him, and at least provide a respectful burial. She became the Apostle to the Apostles who were still weeping and mourning, bringing them the incredible news; Jesus was risen from the dead and had spoken with her.

From that moment darkness and fear were gradually replaced by light, hope and joy. Two thousand years later, we share the belief, that hope and the conviction that truth, justice, love and peace will triumph over the dark forces of injustice and death.

Renato Lima de Oliveira, the President General of the Society, in his recent letter to all SVP members, points to the challenges facing us in our day – and calls us to go on trying to provide loving, fraternal and caring support, bringing hope to those without hope, love to the abandoned and affection to those excluded from society. The youth, the children, the sick, the elderly, the lonely, the immigrants, the refugees, the families displaced by war, religious or political persecution, the individuals living deep in depression or with drug addictions. These are our people here in England and Wales. Jesus is risen, and is with us. As Vincentians we are called to serve God by loving and serving him in those who are in need. Reach out to them in His name, and with His power.

**Fr Paul C Roche CM**



# Fit for the Future

**In this addition of your magazine you will find several pages on the subject of 'strategy'. Determining the strategic direction of the Society is not easy, particularly when faced with major inhibitors such as lack of funding or a disinclination to change. There are so many things that are just brilliant about the SVP and yet we have a duty to modernise and to build a Society fit for the future. There is so much poverty, in changing forms, to address. There is much to be done.**

I am reminded of our Rule 1.6 – “Adaptation to a Changing World” which reads: “Faithful to the spirit of its founders, the Society constantly strives for renewal, adapting to changing world conditions. It seeks to be ever aware of the changes that occur in human society and the new types of poverty that may be identified or anticipated. It gives priority to the poorest of the poor and those who are rejected by society.”

And so we are called to “renewal”. But how to bring this about in practice? I am galvanised by the words of Blessed Frédéric: “Beware of discouragement: it is the death of the soul.”

The Board has focused its strategy discussions on the “three Ms”: Mission, Members, Money. The Board’s vision in relation to each one is that, at the end of its term, the following will be achieved:

### Mission

**The Society is responsive, values-led, innovative, collaborative and measurably effective in carrying out its mission.**

### Members

**The members of the Society are actively engaged in a local, national and global Vincentian movement, united in prayer, action and mission.**

### Money

**The Society is sustainable, well-resourced and financed by a variety of income streams.**



National President Helen on an SVP visit to Mary

What underpins the strategic focus? – the aim to enable innovation and, where needed, specialist response to need through our Conferences and Community Support Projects; the desire for members’ satisfaction, growth and empowerment; the development of our youth, twinning and camps programmes; becoming a Living Wage employer. Financial growth and the securing of a solid and modern infrastructure is essential to allow us to develop a Society fit for the future.

At a recent very collaborative and lively National Council meeting, the Board and Central Council Presidents shared and debated their strategic vision and plans. CC Presidents will be taking away the strategy and looking at how to bring it alive in each Central Council and charging each District Council and Conference to do the same. Conference members may be asking themselves: Are we sure we are meeting the need in our area? Can we look for new ways of, in the words of Bl. Frédéric, “seeking those who do not send for us”? Can we recruit an extra member? Can we support our local Youth SVP Group or Mini Vinnies? Can we raise extra funds for local needs or support national fundraising campaigns?

The challenge is to rise up and meet the future with a spirit of unity and purpose. Bl. Frédéric said “There must then be agreement among us to double our strength. There must be frequent communications which provide us with good examples and joy in the success of each one.” We are one Society and we need to feel the power of what we do individually and collectively and to support each other in our work and through our prayer.

God bless,

yours in St Vincent and Blessed Frédéric.

**Helen O’Shea, National President**

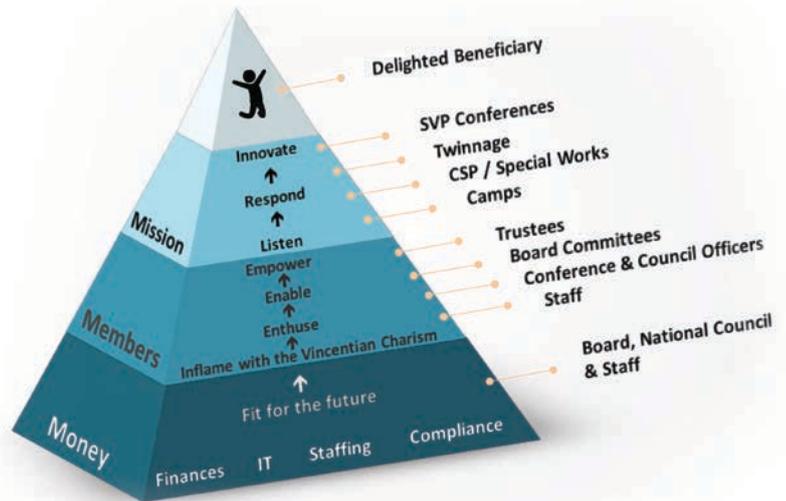
# Our 5 year strategic plan

The backdrop to the strategic plan is the Society’s mission and how best we can reach and serve those people on the margins of society.

Organisations which stand the test of time are those which continually evolve. Since Bl. Frédéric Ozanam founded the Society in 1833 it has always found new ways to address needs which are “of the moment”. Change is a constant. The key to successful evolution is to respect what we already do, while at the same time welcoming change. The strategic plan has been designed as much as possible to enable our members to continue their great work, but also to empower and enable them individually and collectively to do more.

The strategic planning process is ongoing and the plan is a living document. What is presented here is a summary of the current direction of travel. SVP members who serve on the various committees are now busy developing the action plans that will sit under the strategic objectives outlined in this plan. There will be measurable targets for the various objectives and a five year time line highlighting the key mile stones for their delivery. All of these will be available on the members’ website.

## Empowering Members to Delight Beneficiaries



### Our Mission:

**Our Mission is to seek and find those in need, to help them in a spirit of justice and to tackle the causes of poverty where we can.**

### Our Vision:

**Our Vision, which is inspired by Christ’s message to love our neighbour as ourselves, is for individuals and families who are in any form of need to have hope together with a sense of dignity, worth, well-being and peace of mind.**

### Our 5 Year Strategic Goal:

**‘To deliver a sustainable, well resourced organisation, which is responsive to need, values led, innovative and collaborative and whose members are actively engaged in a local, national and global Vincentian movement, united in prayer, action and mission.’**

### Our priorities to achieve our Goal:

 <p><b>Empower our Membership</b></p> <p>“The labourers of the gospel are treasures who deserve to be well taken care of” <b>St Vincent de Paul</b></p>	 <p><b>Extend our Reach</b></p> <p>“I would like to embrace the whole world in a network of charity” <b>Bl Frédéric Ozanam</b></p>	 <p><b>Embrace Innovation</b></p> <p>“Love is inventive, even to infinity” <b>St Vincent de Paul</b></p>	 <p><b>Raise our Profile</b></p> <p>“Our vocation is to go not into one parish, nor into only one diocese, but throughout the whole world. And to do what? To inflame the hearts of men” <b>St Vincent de Paul</b></p>	 <p><b>Build a “Mission Ready” Organisation</b></p> <p>“The poor suffer less from a lack of generosity than from a lack of organisation” <b>St Vincent de Paul</b></p>	 <p><b>Secure Greater Financial Sustainability</b></p> <p>“The treasury of God’s Providence is large” <b>Louis Abelly</b></p>
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# Strategic Plan

## Empower our Membership

**Rationale:** Only through the effective provision of enabling support services, positive communication and membership development opportunities, can the Society build an enthusiastic and empowered body of members of all ages who can respond to local need.

**Strategic objectives:**

- To build an organisation which provides effective & efficient support for all members (Adult & Young Vincentians).
- To promote the Vincentian ethos in the membership in the context of today.
- To provide a framework for member spiritual development.
- To ensure that members feel valued for their positive contribution.
- To provide relevant & enjoyable training to the membership through the Membership Development Programme (MDP).

- To provide targeted support & training to existing officers & those who might consider standing for officer roles.
- To promote topical social justice issues to the membership & suggest ways in which they might take action.
- To provide excellent communication channels between all parts of the Society.



**Measures:**

- Annual Membership Survey statistics.
- MDP attendance statistics.
- MDP evaluation.
- Number of members leaving the Society.
- Number of Conferences going into abeyance.
- Officer turnover.
- Officer vacancies.
- Attendance & evaluation at Festival & National Meetings.

## Extend our Reach

**Rationale:** One of the underlying principles of St Vincent's mission was "more". Not more for ourselves, but more for the poor: more justice, more love, more service.

**Strategic objectives:**

- Monitor & promote recruitment of adult Conferences.
- Expand the numbers of the various Young Vincentian groups (Mini Vinnies, Youth SVP, SVP B-Attitude).
- Seek to establish suitable & sustainable models for SVP 1833 groups in Universities & Parishes.
- Develop Support Centres in new areas.
- Foster meaningful collaboration within the Vincentian family & beyond where it will enrich the service we can provide.
- Increase the number of Twins.
- Increase Indian Scholarships.
- Increase financial support for overseas projects.
- Increase the number of SVP Camp weeks operating annually.

**Measures:**

- Number of Conferences.
- Number of new members.
- Number of new CSP Support Centres.
- Number of Camp weeks.
- Number of beneficiaries.
- Number of collaborations / partnerships.
- Number of Twins.
- Number of Scholarships.
- Financial value of overseas projects.



## Embrace Innovation

**Rationale:** St Vincent de Paul was a great innovator. Through his work we see him analyse the plight of the poor in order to see how he could improve the circumstances of those he was serving, and to ultimately identify an innovative solution. If we, today, are to best meet the needs of those we serve and to be "of the moment" we also need to embrace innovation.



**Strategic objectives:**

- Support the membership in exploring new & innovative ways to seek & find those in need.
- Initiate non-parish based Conference models.
- Develop new advice & support services within our existing Support Centres.
- Develop methodologies for the evaluation of new or pilot projects.
- Identify how IT & digital media can be used at all levels if the Society in order to improve the organisation & its services.
- Define & deliver an IT & digital media strategy.

**Measures:**

- Number of new Conference initiatives.
- Number of non-parish based Conferences.
- Number of new CSP initiatives within existing projects.
- Qualitative & Quantitative assessment of new & pilot projects.
- Level of adoption of new IT systems & procedures.
- Numbers of shops & projects using social media to promote services.

## Raise our Profile

**Rationale:** While the SVP remains relatively unknown by society at large and viewed as parochial by the Catholic Community it cannot hope to reach those most in need, to be an effective voice for the poor or to raise the funds it requires to operate effectively.

**Strategic objectives:**

- To raise awareness of the nature & breadth of our work with the Catholic Community.
- To raise external awareness of the Society beyond the Catholic Community through press, broadcast & digital media.
- To raise external awareness of the Society's response to issues of social justice.

- To publicise our work through public-facing Special Works, CSP shops & projects.

**Measures:**

- Annual brand awareness survey.
- Unsolicited donations.
- Press articles published & Broadcast media items.
- Increased followers on Social Media.
- Social Media shares / retweets.
- Awareness month feedback.
- Recruitment trends.
- Number of people helped.



## Build a “Mission Ready” Organisation



**Rationale:** In order to effectively deliver our vision & mission it is vital that the Society's infrastructure is able to respond to need swiftly, professionally & appropriately.

**Strategic objectives:**

- Streamline governance processes required for approving new projects & initiatives.
- Achieve digitisation of SVP systems & processes as appropriate.
- Achieve regulatory compliance.
- Ensure Trustees have timely financial information.
- Undertake the central banking move with minimum disruption.
- Embed risk management framework across the Society.
- Implement best practice in all areas relating to regulatory compliance, e.g. safeguarding, H&S, GDPR etc.
- Undertake internal audits across all projects.
- Ensure the Society is adequately staffed and can pay an appropriate wage.
- Train, manage & develop all staff to achieve their best.

**Measures:**

- Regular & full reporting to Charity Commission on serious incidents.
- % of KPIs met across compliance areas.
- % of KPIs met across administration & finance functions.
- Time taken to approve or reject legacy or new project applications.
- Member satisfaction with new banking service.
- Attendance at & evaluation of mandatory staff training.
- Reduce staff attrition.
- Reduce staff absence.

## Secure Greater Financial Sustainability

**Rationale:** Only with greater financial sustainability can the Society progress with confidence, maintaining & growing its work in response to the needs of those we serve.

**Strategic objectives:**

- To maximise returns on investment.
- To increase the SVP trading revenue.
- To deliver a major fundraising campaign.
- To increase SVP shop surplus.
- To achieve financial sustainability in all SVP charitable projects (as opposed to retail or trading).
- To close projects which cannot be made financially sustainable.
- To develop a robust reserves policy.
- To ensure cash funds within the Society at Conference, Council & National level are proactively managed for the maximum benefit of those in need.
- To increase Gift Aid within Conferences.
- To increase Gift Aid in CSPs.

**Measures:**

- Growth in fundraising income.
- Growth in profit margin from trading & retail activities.
- Extent to which reserves held fit with organisational need and the Strategic Plan.
- Number of “loss making” projects.
- Shift in income base towards broader sources of sustainable income.
- Levels of cash lying dormant for more than one year at Conference and Council level.
- Growth in gift aid and income.





# The SVP England and Wales – into the future!

**In March 2016, the Trustees and senior managers appointed Durham University's Research Ethics Committee, led by Father Jim Sweeney, to carry out an 'organisational review' of the Society. The purpose of the review was to seek ways to re-align the SVP's structures with its mission and values.**

The review involved a significant number of meetings with senior leaders, Trustees and members of the Society. Twelve focus groups, composed of members from across England and Wales, met in May and discussions were recorded and transcribed. In October, meetings with National Office staff, representatives from National Council, Central and District Council Officers, as well as representatives drawn from the original focus groups, were interviewed. From all this discussion, the recommendations developed.

### Structure

The main finding of the report was: "In our view, the four-level structure (Conference and District, Central and National Councils) is fundamentally viable and necessary, but there needs to be greater flexibility in how it is envisioned and, in the way it works. It appears monolithic, repeating at the next level what's at the previous level (another set of "councils, and "presidents", "secretaries", "treasurers"). We believe a clearer determination of the differentiated roles and responsibilities at each level would be helpful."

We welcome this conclusion. It encourages us to take a fresh look at the Society. To treasure what works, and to question what doesn't. This article looks at the potential for change in the four levels: the Conference, District Council, Central Council and National Council. The recommendations provide an opportunity for members to tailor how they work to local circumstances, which may sometimes mean staying the same.

Let's start with the engine of the Society: the Conference. This is the most important part of the Society, without the work of local members the Society,



Ann Harris taking our Board and National Council through the Organisational Review

as Blessed Frédéric envisaged it, simply would not exist. One of the most challenging issues is appointing officers. Although Conferences will still need to appoint a President, Secretary and Treasurer in name, their responsibilities can be shared among members.

For example, the President might chair the meetings and oversee the work of members; the Secretary might take and circulate the minutes; the Treasurer might complete the Financial Returns, but all other tasks could be shared amongst remaining members. Tasks such as: organising and recording visits and completing the Secretarial Return; banking money; organising spiritual reflections and prayers; following recruitment procedures and keeping up to date with SVP policies and procedures. In this model, there is no need for one person to be overloaded.

### Messages direct to Conferences

Conferences will also see changes in the way they are communicated with. In the future, messages from the National Office will come directly to the Conference. The cascade method, where messages are passed down from National Office, to the Central Council, then to the District Council and eventually to the Conference, will be, for the most part, phased out. District Councils are invited to assess their structure and to suggest changes they would welcome. For example, for geographical or numeric reasons a large District Council may wish to split Conferences into two districts, or, conversely a very small District may wish to join another District.

In general, District Councils have a pattern of meetings that includes a day of reflection, a festival and two business meetings a year. Districts will continue to determine the pattern of their meetings. They are invited to be creative as to the format of meetings and to encourage all members of the District to attend.

In the past, the Society's Strategic Plan rarely found its way to the District. In the future, Central Council Presidents, or their representatives, will share the Trustees' plan so that the District can develop a local plan that reflects the objectives of the Society's Plan. This might be as simple as, arrange a 'Faith in Action' day for members, help one struggling Conference or arrange a Festival meeting to enthuse members. Once agreed, these District priorities become part of the Central Council Plan. Whilst the President's role is daunting at all levels, it can seem most daunting, or even impossible, at Central Council level. The measures in this paper are intended to reduce the burden, increase involvement and strengthen links with Trustees.

## Key players

Traditionally the Central Council has been led by elected Central Council Officers. Each Council will still need named officers but, as at Conference and District level, roles may vary. Councils are encouraged to create a Central Council team of 'key players' who share responsibility for nurturing and developing the whole Central Council. The 'key players', will be members with a special interest in promoting training, recruitment, overseas aid, safeguarding, data protection or youth development. District Council Presidents may sit alongside the 'key players' or may themselves be a 'key player'. Within the Council, one member will be responsible for encouraging the impact of 'key players' in achieving the objectives that District Councils have set. This may be the President.

The geographical region of a Central Council has generally been reflected in the diocesan structure of the church, with Conferences clustered into Districts. Central Councils are encouraged to review their organisation and decide if it is the most effective it can be. For example, a small CC may feel that the DC level is unnecessary, others may wish to regroup DCs for geographical or numeric reasons.

The frequency with which Central Councils meet varies. Central Councils will continue to decide how frequently they meet and are encouraged to be creative as to the format and frequency of meetings, according to their needs. Through their work as National Council members, Central Council Presidents are asked to take a greater strategic role in contributing to the Society's Strategic Plan by joining one of the Board Committees. This will give them influence at an early stage of strategic decision-making.

Once Trustees agree the strategic plan, the Central Council President, or one of the 'key players', will share the plan with the Districts so that they are empowered to develop a District response. Often the help of a 'key player' will be needed to make the plan happen. For example, the trainer may be required to deliver 'Faith in Action'. The Central Council team of 'key players' will be the resource for such help, signposting to other Councils if they lack particular expertise. A few Central Councils already operate in this way.

## A conduit for communication

The role of the Central Council as a conduit for communication, some of which includes following up failure to complete essential returns, will be phased out. These communications will be carried out directly between the National Office and the Conference or District. Each year Central Council Presidents will have the opportunity to discuss their work in their Central Council with a member of the Board of Trustees. The purpose is twofold: to support the Central Council; and to keep the Board in touch with the realities of the Society across England and Wales. In the future, the National Council will meet twice a year, preferably with an overnight stay. An additional meeting of the National Council will, as usual, be held in the year of the election of a new President. Members of National Council will continue to receive accounts and approve the Trustees' Report, as well as receive reports on key projects and initiatives.

It is the aim of the Trustees to increase the impact of National Council on the creation and implementation of the Society Strategic Plan, because it is through this plan that the future of the Society is developed and secured. We are a membership organisation and the Society belongs to all members and all members must have the opportunity to contribute views, and influence the decisions taken. The Board asks that all members, at all levels, join them in seeking ways of fulfilling the Vincentian Mission in today's world.

In the next edition of the Vincentian Concern we will look in detail at the roles of the Board of Trustees and National Office. If you would like to contribute to the debate, or comment on this article, please email [annah@svp.org.uk](mailto:annah@svp.org.uk)

**Ann Harris, Trustee & Chair of the Membership Committee**



# Not forgotten

## Cardinal Vincent Nichols speaks about loneliness



**In a highly reflective interview SVP Patron Cardinal Vincent Nichols tells the Society's Senior Media and Communication Officer Anita Boniface about his thoughts on loneliness.**

"Sitting face to face with Cardinal Vincent Nichols I ask the leader of the Catholic Church in England and Wales whether he ever feels lonely.

"I think loneliness is at its essence a sense of being left out, of being excluded", he responds. "And I don't sense that now. One day maybe I will".

He may not be contemplating personal loneliness at present, but the Cardinal feels loneliness has a profound and deeply felt effect on the lives of many people in this country, especially older people. "I do think that there is a crisis of loneliness especially amongst the elderly," he says. "They may live alone, so they are alone. But their personal experiences are of being forgotten, left out, omitted, and abandoned."

These sensitive and personal experiences of being 'left out' and 'forgotten' make loneliness a difficult subject for many people to talk about; a condition which tends to be hidden is often pushed aside in conversations.

With greater numbers of people now known to feel isolated and 'forgotten', the government has recently appointed MP Tracey Crouch as the UK's first Minister for Loneliness. The rising epidemic of loneliness is often linked to government funding cuts but the Cardinal is reluctant to point the finger when it comes to allocating blame. He feels the causes are "complex" citing reasons "financial, political and managerial". However, he does go further.

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**“ The strongest point I wish to make is that everyone has neighbours. If we really want to tackle the problem of loneliness we must never forget the role that every single person can play. We should never simply reduce the problem of loneliness to an official problem. It is a human problem and we all have a part to play in breaking it.**

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The Cardinal and Archbishop of Westminster is a Patron of the SVP and values the visiting and befriending work of SVP members. He is a strong advocate of charities that offer friendship and emotional support to people often living on their own. Speaking of members' charitable work as a "process of rebuilding a network of friendship in the life of an older person", he describes this friendship building as "the counterpoint of loneliness".

While older people are often left isolated and feeling abandoned or forgotten following deaths of family members and friends, and by the nature of their own frailty and vulnerability, there are other groups in society who are left isolated and lonely because of the prejudice and fear with which they are perceived.

The Cardinal believes that these people, among whom are refugees and asylum seekers, need to be brought into the public consciousness as potential friends to be welcomed and supported in society. They are our 'new neighbours' and should be treated with neighbourly love. As the Gospels remind us and as Pope Francis echoes: "we are never to lose sight of the dignity of the person, so that each asylum seeker is seen not just a part of a number, but as an individual with a story", he says.

Referring to the Government's Community Sponsorship Scheme which empowers local communities to welcome asylum seekers and help them with integration, health and education, the Cardinal explains

that the programme “enables somebody who is in a desperate situation to be received as a person, because there is a host community waiting to welcome them and get to know them and make them feel at home.”

He feels the scheme “personalises what is otherwise just a great television drama of crowds of people who are desperate, and opens the way for generous people in their communities to help by recognising the individuality and the personality of those that are seeking help.”

The Cardinal cites social media as one effective way of sharing the individual stories of asylum seekers. He advises: “news flows very quickly and stories are told very vividly through social media. Let other people understand that refugees and asylum seekers are not scroungers and people trying to get free use of the NHS. They are people who are genuinely desperate. So tell their story.” By changing perceptions and welcoming people into our communities, the Cardinal feels that those who are regularly marginalised, or even worse, demonised will not feel that sense of being excluded and isolated.

However, he readily acknowledges that there is a group of people in society who are regularly excluded, forgotten and ‘demonised’, this being because of their mental illness. People experiencing mental ill health are especially vulnerable to loneliness because at the height of their suffering others may find it difficult to relate to them effectively, and when recovering they are still tarred with the stigma of their disability, which often denies them employment and prevents them from being accepted by society.

The Cardinal acknowledges that mental ill health is becoming a growing concern in today’s Western world. Following the recent attention given by Prime Minister



Theresa May to mental illness amongst the young, the Cardinal speaks of some of the complexities that young people face growing up in contemporary society. Having praised social media, he also acknowledges its potential for harm, saying: “I think instinctively that our understanding of our own individuality might be more fragile than it used to be. Slowly I am beginning to understand, for instance, that a young person’s sense of identity will include the arena of social media. So when they are undermined in that social space it is actually experienced as an undermining of who they are. Social media isn’t part of who I am. But I think it is for young people and I actually think that makes them more susceptible to being bullied, being stigmatised and therefore being more vulnerable to mental health issues.”

For people of any age, mental health issues are both exacerbated by and can lead to, homelessness. The Cardinal is a patron of two homelessness charities – The Passage and the Cardinal Hume Centre. He explains that staff from The Passage can spend anything up to 18 months trying to persuade a homeless person sleeping rough to come indoors and says that “the issues are complex”, involving tensions around self-esteem, trust, and safeguarding. Recent reports show that homeless people often suffer abuse from the public, and are exceptionally vulnerable to suffering – be it alienation from others or being without loved ones such as family, all of which leads to loneliness.

By reaching out to people living on the margins of society such as those experiencing homelessness, enduring mental illness, seeking asylum, and living alone without family, we will call them in from the peripheries, and help them integrate more fully into society. In doing so we can help fight loneliness, and develop more enriching relationships, for everyone.





Members from St Thomas's load up donations for Calais

## SVP helps out Calais Refugees

SVP members at St Thomas's Church, Sevenoaks have not forgotten the many refugees at the camp in Calais known as 'The Jungle'. Members organised a second appeal in September for clothes, sleeping bags and blankets for the refugees of Northern France. Phil Kerton collected the bags on behalf of Seeking Sanctuary, a charity organising assistance for refugees through faith communities. Phil took the donations straight to Calais where they were immediately distributed and received a heartfelt thank you.

"The situation in Calais is harder than it has ever been" wrote one volunteer. "There are fewer donations and volunteers, but approximately 800 exiles in Calais and almost 1,000 nearby."

Help from charities like the SVP through its members is vital.

## Helping serve Hot Meals to Hereford's Homeless

When Hereford City Council needed help serving hot breakfasts to the homeless, the SVP at St Francis Xavier's Church stepped in to lend a hand. Together with PAC (Parish Advisory Council), SVP members teamed up with Open Door – a local charity providing breakfasts to local people in need. Over the past six months members have been providing funding and volunteers for a weekly 8am Bacon and Egg Butty Breakie for the homeless at St Peter's Church Hall in the city centre. Up to 35 people get fed and Stephen Booth, Conference Treasurer, says the additional toast and tea also goes down a treat.

## Five decades of service



Terry Conway of the St Mary Magdalen and St Teresa Conference, Penwortham stood down as Secretary on 9th May 2017 after 43 years in the post, surely a record. Terry joined the SVP in May 1959 as a member of the St Raphael Conference, Cheshire.

In 1960 he became its President, until the spring of 1962 when he transferred to the St Mary Magdalen Conference in Penwortham, Preston. In July that year he became that Conference's first Vice President and remained in that role until April 1967 when he became the founding President of St Teresa's Conference, Penwortham. When his presidency finished in 1974 he took on the role of Secretary and faithfully performed that duty for the next 43 years.

When St Mary Magdalen's went into abeyance in 2002 it merged with St Teresa's and became the St Mary Magdalen and St Teresa Conference, now a vibrant and active Conference. Not content with resting on his laurels, Terry also served as District President of the Leyland District Council from 1977 to 1982, and was also president of the South West Lancashire Central Council from 1981 to 1990. During this period he was an ex-officio member of the England and Wales National Council. In 1984 he addressed the National Conference in the Isle of Man on the topic of unemployment. Terry regards this as the proudest moment of his SVP membership.

Alongside his work as an SVP member Terry worked as a Chief Engineer for the Lancashire County Council, while rearing a young family with his beloved wife, Vera, who recently died, may she rest in peace. One wonders where all the energy comes from to undertake all these tasks. Right through, however, he remained dedicated and faithful to the activities of the SVP and his experience is still called upon today. The St Mary and St Teresa Conference celebrated its 50th Anniversary in April 2017. This was a unique occasion for Terry, its first President, to experience the warmth and fellowship of the Conference which he started 50 years earlier. Well done Terry and thank you for your selfless dedication to the SVP over the past 58 years.

# 100 years of befriending

## Nottingham's SVP members and beneficiaries celebrate together

One hundred years since its formation in 1917, the SVP Conference of Our Lady & St Edward, Nottingham celebrated their anniversary with a Mass of Thanksgiving on Saturday 2nd December.

The well attended Mass was followed by a lively buffet lunch attended by Conference members from across Nottingham Central Council. Families visited by the SVP were also in attendance, making this a happy celebration for members and beneficiaries alike.

Nottingham Central Council SVP members marked their combined work helping to run Ozanam House, a home for vulnerable young women, as well as helping to run foodbanks, accompanying refugees and asylum seekers to official interviews, organising holidays for older housebound people, and befriending many people in need in the locality.

May the excellent work of Our Lady & St Edward's Conference members last well beyond another 100 years!



The celebration cake being cut by Mike Asker, Vice President of the Nottingham Diocese Central Council, and Doreen Varley, President of Our Lady & St Edward's Conference

## Conference President's special contribution



Jane Clarke, Conference President of Our Lady and St Kenelm SVP Conference, Halesowen, West Midlands, was made an MBE in the Queen's New Year's Honours. Jane was recognised for her services to vulnerable women and children in Dudley in the West Midlands. Jane retired as Chief

Executive of Churches Housing Association in Dudley and District (CHADD) in 2016.

Conference Vice President Mike Weaver said: "We are all thrilled for Jane and very proud of her achievements. No blushes were spared at Mass in the parish as she was given the warmest round of applause!"

## HAM uses its Mind

In February Holy Apostles and Martyrs (HAM) SVP invited the local branch of Mind to give a training session on Mental Health Awareness. Fifteen members, who had all joined the Conference since the last session in 2013, attended the day, which focused on what mental health problems are, the stigma attached to them and strategies for keeping yourself in good mental health. There was plenty to learn and discuss and everyone felt they had acquired useful knowledge and skills to help in the work.





### SVP provides a warmly welcomed Christmas meal on a snowy Winter's day in Beaconsfield

The heavy snow did not deter over 70 hungry guests from enjoying a traditional turkey and trimmings Christmas lunch organised by St Teresa's SVP Conference in Beaconsfield on Tuesday 12th December.

The delicious and hearty lunch complete with mince pies and trifle was organised for regulars of the SVP's Coffee & Company Tuesday morning events, together with residents from a local care home where SVP members organise Word & Communion sessions and have come to know many people living there.

A beautiful prayer of grace was said by the new Parish Priest at St. Teresa's, Mgr Sean Healey.



Over 70 hungry guests hosted by St Teresa's



### Fundraising fun for all generations!

Little Eleri, grand-daughter to Angela Spray of St Frances SVP Conference, Ross on Wye, Herefordshire proved that no one is too young to get involved with SVP Conference work when she sold SVP Christmas cards after Mass in December. Eleri took great pride in wearing her lucky hairband. Unsurprisingly all the SVP Christmas cards quickly sold out!

### Four decades of dedicated service



Peter Jordan with his family and members of his SVP Conference, Greenford

Peter Jordan recently marked his 40th year as an SVP member in Our Lady of the Visitation Conference, Greenford. At a presentation to recognise four decades of hard work Siobhan Garibaldi, Westminster Central Council President said: "Peter has been a hard worker, both in his capacity as a long serving President and as a member, and he has planted seeds that have grown and will continue to grow. He has laid solid foundations for the community at this church to build on and has inspired many".

Peter was joined at the celebrations by his wife Angela who has supported him throughout the years.

# Engaged and Ecumenical

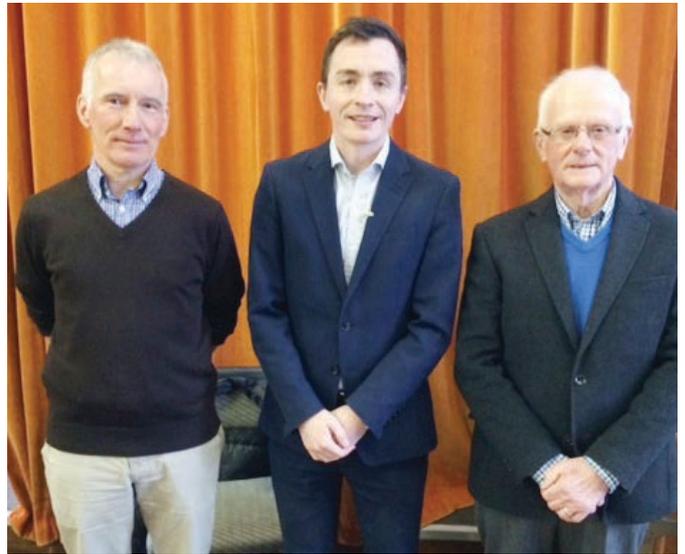
## Interdenominational Festival meeting takes place in Altrincham

An extremely positive example of ecumenism at work took place at the Altrincham District Council, Shrewsbury Diocese Festival meeting on Sunday 18th February.

More than 60 people attended including members of the local United Reformed and Methodist churches who joined SVP members to provide a wonderful example of inter-denominational work to help people in need.

Councillor Sean Anstee, Leader of Trafford Council, was the guest speaker. The Councillor presented on the challenges of homelessness in Trafford and the Borough's efforts to alleviate these problems through affordable housing.

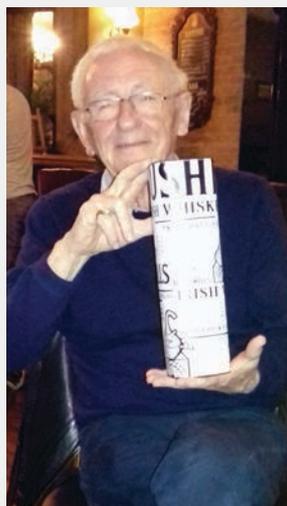
There were many interesting questions from the highly engaged audience and Councillor Anstee was delighted to answer these questions and promised to take up issues he is in a position to address.



Councillor Sean Anstee flanked by DC President Kieron Walsh (left) and SVP member Tony Campion

## A quarter of a century of service

An 85 year old member of Immaculate Conception Conference in Clevedon has retired after 25 years. Brian Walsh served willingly and faithfully visiting, advising beneficiaries on financial matters, providing transport to and from hospital. Supportive and grateful members of his Conference got together on February 6th 2018 for a little celebration to say farewell and to wish him every success for the future.



## A touch of craftiness in Caterham

For the second year running, the Sacred Heart Conference, Caterham took an active part in planning and running our Parish Christmas Market. This successful event raised £3200, 25% of which was gratefully received by the SVP. This was a wonderful opportunity to work with other Parish groups and our Art and Craft stall was very well received!





# Sevenoaks goes Sausages!

St Thomas of Canterbury SVP, Sevenoaks love a good sausage roll! Members decided they would share their passion for these tasty winter treats, by holding a sausage roll sale at their church. In total the sale made £283.56 profit which will go to the people of South Sudan and the vital baby feeding centres. This has been a very successful way of raising money for 4 years now and the Conference wanted to share their idea with other SVP groups.

The idea is to “keep it simple”. Members set up a stand in the church porch selling one main fresh product: “sausage rolls”. There was a choice of meat or vegetarian, priced at £1 each.



That’s as complicated as it gets. Parishioners now get excited when they see the Conference’s announcement in the newsletter reminding them of the sale. Many come back for seconds on the day. Not one to miss an opportunity, members took advantage of having a stand to sell some Christmas cards too.



## Tom Smart Loneliness is my distress

This piece of Society News is about a man named Tom Smart. Helped by his local SVP in Walton Vale, Liverpool. Tom lives alone in Wavertree, Liverpool.

On the Conference’s first meeting with Tom members quickly realised that he had limited mobility and depended on his electric scooter to get about. Almost his first words were “I am lonely”. He told them that he spent hours and hours on his own – despite the brief visits from carers and other residents in the sheltered accommodation where he lived in his small flat.

Barry Kirby, SVP president for Walton Vale reports: “In all my time with the SVP I have never witnessed anyone who thanked us in such a heartfelt manner. His gratitude to us for visiting him was so joyous that he really lifted us and gave us the fortitude and motivation to carry on to help those in need even more.”

Just before the SVP started visits, Tom had, on his own, decided to do something about his loneliness and had started attending afternoon classes at a nearby centre. The subject he chose was ‘creative writing’. Uniquely he started to write his projects in a unique poetic style – here is an example....

## The SVP

*By Tom Smart, Dec 2017*

**Barry from the SVP was  
a name given to me  
To him I said, loneliness  
is my distress**

**An old, old Society guided  
by the love of God  
Weekly visits they do proud**

**And from the start  
it was plain to see  
A good man had been sent to me**

**Interest in my hobby showed  
how my confidence has grown  
From the interest, he has shown**

**Barry is now my friend which  
I’m sure will always be  
Thank God for the SVP**

# Crossing continents

## A letter from a Twinned Conference in India

Padley Martyrs SVP Conference, Chesterfield is twinned with the SVP Conference of St Paul's church at Etharla Palli in Andhra Pradesh, India. It is a small village community where no one speaks English. All communications with the UK are translated via the Central Council. Following Christmas greetings from Padley Martyrs, the Indian Conference sent this letter of thanks.

"Thank you dear members of your Conference for your kind letter. We wish you a Happy Christmas and New Year. We are a small Conference of seven active members. All of us are dependent on agriculture and earn mostly seven dollars a day on average.

Our Conference has 'adopted' five families and we give them thirty dollars every month. Anything remaining we use to help children from our village to go to school.

With the money you have provided we have also established a tailoring project which provides employment for two girls, one of whom is a Conference member, and have also been able to set up a small shop.



St Paul's SVP Conference, Etharla Palli in Andhra Pradesh, India

We are receiving your Twinnage payments on time (£150 each year). We are very thankful for that".

Padley Conference is the sole remaining Conference in Chesterfield, but they have ten active members and remain determined to carry on funding (and communicating) with two Conferences in India.

## 36 years service to the SVP

Mrs Margaret McHale (known as Peggy) received her long service certificate at a Mass for the sick & housebound from the Parish Priest of Our Lady & English Martyrs Urmston, Manchester, Fr. David John Featherstone.

"Thank you Peggy for all your hard work in the SVP over the years." said Mrs Pauline McDonnell, Conference President.



## Parish Pancakes raise funds for India

SVP members at St Teresa's Parish church, Beaconsfield are busy running Coffee mornings each Tuesday. On Shrove Tuesday they hosted a pancake day for all members of the parish. All donations were used to fund education of nurses in India.

The event was well attended and over £300 was raised. Some of the children on the Confirmation course attended and helped out with serving, clearing and washing up, help that was much appreciated!



# The Giving Tree at Our Lady of Ransom

**SVP Members from Our Lady of Ransom Conference, Eastbourne (OLR) came up with a creative and practical way to collect donations for families during Advent.**

In November members decided to try a new approach to supporting those in need within their community for Christmas. Members created a Giving Tree to collect donations for a number of charities. The tree was hung with gift tags, each describing a gift that would help a disadvantaged person. The gift tags are chosen by those charitable parishioners who wished to help those in need, and the presents were purchased, wrapped and the tag attached to the gift. The labelled present was returned to the church to be distributed by the SVP to those who were identified as in need of that specific gift.

Gifts went to St Wilfrid's Hospice, Demelza Hospice Care for Children, Hazel Court Special School, The Matthew 25 Mission, Eastbourne Winter Night Shelter, Refugee Drop-in at the Sanctuary Café, Eastbourne Foodbank, Eastbourne SVP's own OLR parishioners in need. It was decided that the Giving Tree would be a Jesse (the first example dates from 1086 AD) given by Father Raglan, Parish Priest at OLR. Rising to the challenge, the SVP team designed and built a Jesse Tree as a base for the Eastbourne SVP Giving Tree!

The Giving Tree was built as a very large brown tree image on a beige banner, 2.7 metres tall by 1.7 metres across, with Velcro used to attach the 24 Jesse Tree symbols on the upper branches and attach the gift tags around the base of the tree. The Giving Tree was hung very high to the side of the altar in OLR church & blessed by Fr Gerard at the first Sunday of Advent Vigil Mass on Saturday 2nd December and immediately opened to the parishioners of OLR for tag selection.

Well, the team woefully underestimated the demand for gift tags by our wonderful parishioners! The gift tags all but vanished after two Masses, so members had to move fast to create more tags on that first Sunday afternoon in time for the 5:30pm Mass. This was not the last occasion that we had to top up the gift tags! The initial 105 gift tags attached to The Giving Tree grew to a total of over 230 gift tags deployed.



The many gifts / presents arrived quickly over the next two weekends and we had originally planned to have them stored in a cupboard BUT that quickly had to become the large conference room in the Presbytery!

Altogether we received a massive total of 232 gifts from OLR parishioners! Many large plastic sacks were needed to carry the gifts to the various organisations in the week before Christmas by the SVP team. In fact new organisations had to be added for receiving gifts – The Blind Society & The Salvation Army.

Many thanks are due to the Parishioners of Our Lady of Ransom for their kindness & generosity, but also thanks are due to Eastbourne SVP Team for enabling the giving. Special thanks are to be given to the Purvis family who led the design and creation of The Giving Tree as well as the gift tags and also to MaryRose Bracuti for the creation of the Jesse Tree symbols.

All in all, it was a great Parish project demonstrating real Charity and Love for those disadvantaged in our community. This looks like the start of an annual event! ...and perhaps the SVP will be spreading the idea across the Diocese?

## Catholic Social Teaching

**What does the term “Catholic Social Teaching” mean to you? It is one that many are unfamiliar with. Put simply it means that we try to walk in the footsteps of Jesus as closely as we can, love our neighbour as ourselves, showing respect for all and putting our faith into action. There are many good ways of doing this but becoming an active enthusiastic SVP member is one of the best.**

The SVP has several working committees fulfilling various functions to support the work of Conference members. One is the Social Justice Committee which seeks to raise awareness of issues within the Society and elsewhere. The current issues we have been dealing with are as follows:

- **Refugees, Asylum Seekers, Prisoners, Racism, Immigration, Slavery.**
- **Housing, Homelessness, Poverty** (including In-Work Poverty Families)
- **The Benefits System** – Universal Credit, Benefit Sanctions, Bedroom Tax, Work Capability Assessment.

I would like to invite any member to get in touch with us to raise other issues for our attention, ask questions or give feedback on our work. All responses will be explored and replied to. One benefit of having our Secretarial Returns online is that we now have a record of how many Conferences engage directly with cases of poverty and hardship, which categories they come into and where we are most involved across England & Wales. We now have our own data to refer to instead of relying exclusively on outside sources. It is the duty of our members to make sure that this information is accurately recorded and entered online when the returns are submitted each year. The Society has also started an online forum in the members area of our website. Please check it out and get involved.

The work that Blessed Frédéric Ozanam and his co-founders, inspired by St Vincent de Paul, undertook in the early part of the 19th Century was radical in its day. They cared for the very poorest people at a time when charity did not exist and there were no lay organisations in the Catholic Church. The sense of urgency driven by the emotion and cruelty of the poverty in Paris motivated Blessed Frédéric and his companions to get out onto the streets and do something practical to try to relieve it. “They responded with dynamism, inventiveness, love and energy in a spirit of prayer, humility and great fraternity.” (The Mind and Heart of a Vincentian, page 62)



Today the poor face many challenges. As SVP members we must continue to raise our own awareness of need in the local communities we serve, facilitating access to relevant support and working together with others to seek and find those in the greatest need. If we can achieve closer engagement with local initiatives which promote the cause for Social Justice it will help to raise awareness of the Society’s work and increase our involvement with those of other faiths or none.

For several years my own Conference has maintained regular liaison with our local Churches Together Homelessness Project with ongoing member involvement in their Drop-In Sessions and Winter Night Shelter, supporting Young Carers and other local groups who share our aims of alleviating poverty, loneliness, hardship and injustice. In June we will be involved in a new activity. This is a local Unity Festival aimed at promoting harmony among the various groups in society. The Unity Festival celebrates the strengths and diversity of local people by building community cohesion, celebrating diversity, fostering good relations and promoting understanding between and within its diverse communities. Various organisations will showcase a range of activities on offer within the community that local people can get involved in. Our Conference will have a stall promoting the SVP and be supported by our Mini Vinnies on the day.

The Social Justice Committee aims to keep up to date on Social Justice issues, produces Vincentian Concern articles, SVP Fact Sheets, e.g. Food Poverty, Funeral Poverty and contributes to National, Regional and local SVP meetings. Please get in touch via the National Office if you would like more information.

**Raymond Daley, Chair of SVP Social Justice Committee**  
Email: [raymond@svp.org.uk](mailto:raymond@svp.org.uk)



## Young Vincentians

# Joe goes that extra mile to win hearts for an important cause!

At Rosary Catholic Primary School in North London, Mini Vinnies has been up and running since the start of the academic year and already it is having a huge and positive impact on the school and its local community.

One of the Mini Vinnies' biggest projects so far has been collecting donations for the homeless. The school was inundated with generous offerings of non-perishable goods and toiletries for those in need across London during this winter time which were distributed by a Catholic charity for the homeless. One of the Rosary Mini Vinnies, Joe Crowley from Reception Class, was so moved by the plight of the homeless in London that he decided to do something extra to help this worthy cause. He decided to do a run around the big athletics track at Hampstead Heath (that's over 400 metres!).

Joe, who is only five years old but who saw something that bothered him, decided he could do something about it and he went on and achieved his goal! He has since visited a Catholic homeless shelter where he could see all the brilliant work that goes on and how



**“When my Mini Vinnie teachers told me that people didn’t have homes, I knew I wanted to tell people who might not be Mini Vinnies. I thought the more people that know, then more people can help Mini Vinnies like me, to help the homeless, then we could help them to buy a home or just food. I really like helping people!”**

**Joe Crowley**

important it is to support these places so that they can keep up their wonderful work. He is the epitome of what a Mini Vinnie should be and an inspiration to us all!

## Living faith through actions



Luke shares with us how they raised money to support pupils in their own school! Luke and his Mini Vinnies friends have been a true inspiration to how fundraising can be used to help their direct neighbours in need!



The Mini Vinnies started October 16 and has 11 members. It is a spectacular foundation turning concern into action. The society is fantastic changing your ideas into something possible. At our school, St Anne's & St Joseph's, we have our mini-vinnies plans and raised 50 money. For instance, we raised £369.31 on a non-uniform day and that goes to help the money for our school. We help people get through the stages of their lives by encouragement and helpfulness.

Why you should join?

You should join mini-vinnies because it you enjoy helping others mini-vinnies is an inspirational society; it helps you and others get through all the tough times. At the moment, our school is giving Christmas hampers to the poor who never get to know what a real Christmas is like.

## College Gains a 'New Class and Teacher'

**Carmel College in Darlington has a very large and active Youth SVP Conference (over 50 students in Years 7 and 8) along with a newly formed B-Attitude Group for Year 9 and above with over 10 members.**

During Advent 2017, they organised a collection throughout the College to raise funds for the SVP Twinnage Indian Student Sponsorship. They went around every class, all 44 of them, and asked each student to donate 50p, raising £439 in a matter of days. The two local adult Conferences of Holy Family and St Augustine's, who work closely with the Young Vincentians, also donated extra money to the collection, contributing to an overall grand sum of £520. This enables them to sponsor 30 school students and one trainee teacher for a year.

Carmel College has effectively gained a 'New class and teacher'. Although practically this class will be made up of students from different areas in India, it is a great way of visualising the scale of help Carmel students have achieved. The money has been sent to the SVP Twinnage scheme and the students are awaiting the individual certificates that will name the Indian students and their locations. Carmel have asked to sponsor students in Years 7 to 11, allowing them to relate better to the students involved. David Watson, President of St Augustine's, Darlington Conference, commented "The Youth SVP and B-Attitudes have brought a refreshing spirit to the work of the SVP locally. Their enthusiasm is contagious and it is a pleasure to work with them and occasionally attend their meetings. The Student Sponsorship compliments our own Twinnage Sponsorship of two SVP Conferences in India. The Mini Vinnies at St Augustine's Primary school have also raised money to sponsor 15 Indian children in recent years."

Carmel students plan to form a small dedicated team who will publicise the scheme by developing a display in the College showing who the students are, their locations and general information on the schools and areas they live in. They are not allowed to directly contact the Indian students, however the objective is to build an understanding and appreciation of people their own age but in very different circumstances.



Andrew Gardner, Lay Chaplain at Carmel College and members of the Youth SVP Group

Andrew Gardner, Lay Chaplain at Carmel College, started the SVP groups three years ago and is supported by four other teachers and three sixth formers, guiding the Young Vincentians in their meetings and work.

Andrew explained "The Students have a great enthusiasm for the SVP and are a living embodiment of the SVP motto of 'Turning Concern into Action'. They are all very keen and have been very active. They are collecting food for the local food bank (in which the adult SVP are involved) and toilet rolls for the Refugee Project run by the Justice & Peace group based in the SVP Deaf Centre in Newcastle. They also visited three care homes during Advent, singing carols and presenting small gifts to the residents. The Twinnage sponsorship is an ideal way for the students to see the breadth of the activities carried out by the SVP working at local, regional, national and international levels. We will continue over the coming years to be involved in the sponsorship and use it to educate the whole College in both the needs of students in difficult circumstances and the work of the SVP."

Mike Shorten, Principal of Carmel College, sees the Young Vincentians as a vital part of the character development of young people at Carmel. "The work the group has developed shows how the ethos of the SVP, basing practical works of charity in a Spiritual context, can bring about real change for good and develop the students sense of community, both locally and internationally."

The students are embarking on an exciting journey, truly developing not only a sense of worldwide community but also their faith in loving thy neighbour, albeit over 4,000 miles away! We, the SVP, should be very proud of how Carmel College Vincentians are working together to make a difference. For more information please email: [southwarkcctwin@aol.com](mailto:southwarkcctwin@aol.com)



# Helping Locally

## Bishop Marcus Stock officially opens new SVP shop in Brighouse

**On 16th November 2017 the Bishop of Leeds, Marcus Stock, made an official visit to the latest SVP shop to open in West Yorkshire.**

On arrival at the shop he chatted to Leeds CC President Marie Atherton, outgoing National President Adrian Abel, members of staff, customers and SVP members and quickly became at ease in the shop. At 11 o'clock everyone gathered outside for the introductions and the formal opening, and afterwards everyone moved back indoors for a short service and blessing.

In his introduction Bishop Stock linked the Christian faith through Jesus with Frédéric Ozanam and rounded up with a quote from St Vincent de Paul "...set people's hearts on fire, to do what the Son of God did. He came to set the world on fire in order to inflame it with His love." The setting up of this shop was made possible when a much-loved and fondly remembered SVP member



Bishop Marcus presenting Susie Gandy with the plaque

Bernard Preston died and left the Leeds CC a large legacy, part of which was used for the shop.

Bernard was a great supporter of the SVP Special Works and would be honoured to know that his legacy is helping to open a further conduit to the SVP membership with help and support for people in this area. Bishop Marcus presented a plaque to Susie Gandy, the Shop Manager, for display in the shop and to commemorate Bernard.

# Bountiful Pontypridd



**St Vincent's Community Shop Pontypridd opened just before Christmas and is being managed by Luke Lloyd – Blatchford who has joined us having worked for Barnados and Scope.**

Luke is already being supported by some fantastic volunteers and the team are building relationships with people within the local community and are enjoying all the positive feedback they are receiving.

It is always difficult opening a new shop particularly with no depot to feed the shop with stock, and so the support from the other SVP shops in the area who have been collecting and keeping stock to send over to 'Ponty' has been fabulous. Thank you! A 'Grand Opening' ceremony took place on 28th February with Father Allan Davies-Hale attending and blessing the shop. There were, of course, plenty of refreshments throughout the day for the SVP members who attended and for the customers.

Helen Voyce, Area Manager said:

**“ It is wonderful for the CSP team to be part of this community and another great opportunity for us to raise more funds for the SVP.**

## Hallam Young Chaplaincy Leaders Group adopt Sheffield Furniture Store

There are 6 Catholic High Schools within the Hallam Diocese. Three year 8 pupils from each school have joined together to create the Hallam Young Chaplaincy Leaders Group.

Their Mission is as follows: 'We are a community of young people who are diverse, loving and seek a common purpose to help others. We aim to make a difference to those in need through support, love, action and prayer'.

Lorraine Healy writes: "I was invited to attend an afternoon with the group to talk about St Vincent's Furniture Store and explain to them the vital work we do. The Group was very interested in our work and as a result of finding out about us decided to 'adopt' us as the Charity they wanted to help. They set about collecting donations of toiletries, sleeping bags, drinks, food, hats, gloves, rucksacks and so much more. On Friday 15th December the group, along with their Chaplains, Tammy, Bernie, Anne, Siobhan, Polly and Suzanne, who are all instrumental in the setting up, supporting and running the group, delivered the



Lorraine Healy (Manager) and Bishop Ralph with members of the Hallam Young Chaplaincy Group and their Chaplaincy Co-Ordinators

donations to us at the Store. Bishop Ralph and many parents also attended and the group members spoke about how it felt to be part of this act of giving and also their plans for the future. Bishop Ralph commented on the team saying that in the world today so much negativity is spoken about the youth and these young people were proving all those comments wrong.

All the items donated to us here at the store have been given to the clients that we assist. Everyone at the Store would like to thank the Hallam Young Chaplaincy Leaders for their thoughtfulness and caring. They are a credit to their Schools, Chaplains and families."

## Tower House Powered Up to Combat Loneliness and Dementia



At Christmas Luke Fernandez and Monty Mike Mason (pictured) were part of the celebrations that saw over 50 older people come for Christmas dinner at Tower House, Brighton. The members and staff

were given glowing feedback about the services at this time of year in a recent survey. Tower House goes from strength to strength as the service starts to scale up. In December the kitchen was fully up

and running and is now ready to serve more food 3 days a week. In February Tower House started its new "Healing Music" sessions and on Valentine's day Jing massage came in to offer free sessions to all people who come to the House. In March a new dementia café funded by the National Lottery was opened and Tower House is also looking for funding to start Yoga and Zumba sessions.

The primary aim of St Vincent's Tower House is to combat the poverty of loneliness experienced by older people, as well as to give even more support to carers. We are certainly on course to achieve this objective and are already linking in with Local Authority Commissioner of Services and the CCG health leads to ensure we meet the varying needs of the local people. If you would like further information about what we are doing at St Vincent's Tower House please contact [katen@svp.org.uk](mailto:katen@svp.org.uk)



## Making a difference to people in India

**SVP Trustee and Twinnage officer Sebastian Muir talks to Senior Media and Communications Officer Anita Boniface about learnings reaped from his recent trip to Conferences in India.**

“It all starts with a simple pedal powered sewing machine”, says Sebastian. “From there come garments which are sold, then a small tailoring business, some profit, some more sewing machines and more money to pay for the children to go to school and the family to be fed”, he continues.

Sebastian is telling me about the microloans scheme that the SVP in India facilitates through donations to communities of villagers. Without these microloans the villagers would remain in poverty.

“It’s a virtuous circle”, Sebastian says. “SVP members in England and Wales make a collective donation of maybe £300 to the National SVP in India. This is disseminated through the efficient organisational structure of Central Council, District Council to local Conferences (SVP groups) on the ground, who loan the money to villagers.

“The villagers buy something – maybe a sewing machine to make garments to sell, or a pair of cattle. From the cattle they get calves, which in turn produce milk and meat that can be sold for profit. It grows from there. They pay back the interest-free loan and then keep the remaining profit for their families.

Sebastian points out that in this model, the Indian villagers are working and repaying the loans.

“It’s not about creating a culture of dependency,” he says.

“It’s about empowering local people to make something of their lives, just as the SVP does in this country.”

Likewise, there’s a huge focus on helping with education. When a village family member dies, perhaps a father running a rickshaw business is tragically killed or injured in a road traffic accident, it means the breadwinner of the family is no longer able to sustain his family. Often the eldest child – maybe a teenager – will be pulled out of school so that they can work instead, thereby bringing in money for their family. SVP Twinnage support helps with schooling costs or scholarships, to encourage the family to keep their child in education. This improves the prospects for the child, who can often go on to university and secure a job which will later support his or her younger siblings and remaining parent.

Sebastian has just returned from a visit to India together with former SVP Twinnage Officer Terry Brown and Head of Fundraising, Communications and Marketing, Ken Madine. Together they witnessed some of the vital work made possible thanks to donations from SVP members. While an Indian family needs around £75 a month for a very basic standard of living, most daily workers will only earn between £25 and £70 a month at the most. This has to cover rent, tax, food, utilities and fuel, electricity (if available). It leaves little over for any emergency medical needs or for schooling. School fees start at £25 a year and can rise to £600. For some workers this is at the least, 10% of their annual income. It means they can’t afford to educate their children, who remain trapped in a cycle of poverty.

Poverty can be extreme, and Sebastian describes some of the Biblical scenes he encounters during his visits to India. “There may be people with leprosy that the local SVP Conference are helping to clothe and care for, or people who have to beg on the streets to survive. Giving someone on the street a simple cup of clean water makes a huge difference. ‘I was thirsty and you gave me to drink’ as Jesus said, has huge relevance in India” says Sebastian.

There is plenty of opportunity to put spirituality and faith into action. It is this faith that equips SVP members, wherever they are in the world, with the strength to cope with the poverty they are helping to alleviate.

A women’s Conference Sebastian met with attend 6.30am Mass on a daily basis and return to church for evening prayers followed by the Rosary. It is not uncommon for SVP members in India to attend daily Mass and faith is foremost in many people’s lives. The Church is extremely active in supporting people suffering poverty, says Sebastian. In each diocese the Archbishop’s Social Service Society works closely with the SVP, and there is a good relationship between the clergy and the Conferences. Sebastian explains that for priests in India, their foremost mission is to develop the spirituality of their parishioners. Therefore there will be a lot of formation work being done which helps members of the SVP renew and strengthen their faith. This in turn equips them to reach out to people who are in poverty, no matter how troubling their circumstances. For Sebastian, faith allows members in both the UK and around the world, to draw from a deep well of resource, and then feed those around them with something life-giving that brings renewal.

Religious Sisters also play a vital role. For example, in a remote region of Assam, the SVP has funded a dispensary where two sisters help with first line medical assessment and treatment. Without the Sisters, the local community would have to travel 60km to the nearest hospital where



local doctors are in short supply. The SVP’s contribution of £200 per quarter goes a long way toward purchasing medication and the upkeep of the dispensary. Sebastian tells me that the model of the dispensary close to the community and linked with a school and church is very effective at helping people of all faiths.

“The strength of community spirit means that the SVP Conferences can really get to know a village” says Sebastian. “Members do home visits and befriend people of many different faiths, Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Jain for example, all living close to each other. By getting to know one family you might get to know their neighbours and all of a sudden members are fully aware of their needs.”

In Kerala the homes of some villagers were destroyed by a cyclone. The Conferences ‘adopted’ families and helped rebuild their homes, and raised money to support them with basic food and school fees. “This is a good example of how SVP Conferences provide a foundation for families to build their lives. By providing a home and food, the Conference helps the family with the basic building blocks they need to look after their children and sustain a livelihood,” says Sebastian.

A process of Internal Twinning is also starting in India, whereby more affluent, middle class Conferences in richer parts of the country twin with poorer Conferences. For example in Tamil Nadu, the Conference at St Thomas’s Cathedral is helping rebuild poorer fishing communities near the coast, equipping them with new fishing boats and nets after a cyclone.

Twinning work puts into action the members’ prayer: “We thank you Lord because you inspired the foundations of our Society to help overcome suffering and the spiritual development of the members.” Through Twinning, we have a further aspect of this spiritual development – spreading our mission, values and spirituality to people around the world.





# Helping you get ready for GDPR

**There has been a lot of work going on in the last 12 months to ensure the Society is prepared for 25th May 2018 when the 'General Data Protection Regulation' (GDPR) comes into force.**

The Governance & Compliance department have worked with the Board of Trustees, Central Council Presidents, CC Data Protection Officers, SVP Members, the Senior Management team and legal advisers on this subject.

In May 2017 Conferences were sent a 'Data Protection Guidance pack'. Since then the Governance & Compliance department has received a lot of enquiries and as a result a number of workshops were run to explore ways in which the guidance and supporting materials could be improved. The workshops were attended by CC Data Protection Officers and Members.

### What we have done

- Revised the wording of the consent section on the beneficiary leaflet
- Clarified when beneficiary consent is required
- Devised a new checklist for Conferences
- Devised a set of Q&As
- Produced guidance and best practice for 'Conference Minutes'
- Produced a 'Conference Log' to capture data in one place
- Produced a Data Protection fact sheet for Conferences.

### Next Steps

- Materials to assist Conferences to comply with GDPR will be distributed by the beginning of May 2018
- More Data Protection workshops will be run during 2018
- CC Data Protection Officers and the Governance & Compliance Manager will be carrying out training in Central Councils in 2018
- Issue Conferences with a SVP E-mail account (Summer 2018)

### Central Council Data Protection Officers

We now have 13 Central Councils that have appointed a Data Protection Officer in their CC and the aim is to have a Data Protection Officer in every CC.



For those CCs that do not have a Data Protection Officer, the CC President has been asked to look for volunteers who will take on the role.

### The Principles of Data Protection

Although the regulation has been renamed and changes have been incorporated into the new GDPR, the principles of data protection should always be followed:

- Data should be processed fairly and lawfully
- Data should only be used for a specific lawful purpose
- Data should be adequate, relevant and not excessive
- Data should be accurate and kept up to date
- Data should only be kept or retained for as long as necessary
- Data should only be processed in accordance with the rights of the person
- Data should be secure and we must avoid accidental loss, damage or destruction
- Data should not be transferred outside of the EU.

### Thank you

I would like to thank all of those members that I have spoken to in the last 12 months for your feedback, understanding and enthusiasm to comply with this regulation. Data Protection is about how we treat data and it affects us all. Most individuals will be happy and assured that we treat information we have about them confidentially and that we will keep it safe in line with the law. SVP Members are experts when it comes to being confidential, which is why I am confident that in most cases only a few changes will be sufficient to ensure that Conferences are complying with Data Protection. Together we can do this.

**Matthew Stockton, Governance & Compliance Manager**

# Let your compassion live on

Free will-writing service available to members until 30th September 2018

**From 1st May to 30th September 2018, the Society is offering to cover the cost of writing a single or mirror will (for a couple) for a limited number of SVP members on a first come, first served basis.**

The importance and impact of our Society's work is something you know about from personal experience. Whether you have recently joined the SVP or have served as a member or auxiliary member for some time, you see at first hand, and on a daily basis, the difference your work makes to people who are lonely or isolated or who struggle in the face of adversity. Sadly, poverty, loneliness and social isolation are on the increase but, thanks to you, our network of support across England and Wales remains strong and effective. You can read elsewhere in this edition about the new Board of Trustees' vision and plans to ensure the Society will be equipped and ready to meet the challenges of the next

five years and to find new ways to extend the hand of friendship to people in need.

The SVP is a member of **Your Catholic Legacy** ([www.yourcatholiclegacy.org.uk](http://www.yourcatholiclegacy.org.uk)) – a group of Catholic charities working together to inspire and encourage people to leave a gift in their will to a Catholic good cause. One of the benefits of our membership is that **Your Catholic Legacy** has recently joined the National Free Wills Network ([www.nationalfreewills.net](http://www.nationalfreewills.net)), a national network of local law firms offering will-writing services to supporters of UK charities whose affairs are straightforward. This is a paid-for wills programme, through which the member charities pay for wills to be written for their members or supporters at a discounted rate. There is no obligation to leave a legacy to any charity, although this will be an opportunity to benefit the work of the SVP in the future, if you would like to do so.

To apply to have your will written under this scheme, or for further details, contact Aisha McCarthy [aisham@svp.org.uk](mailto:aisham@svp.org.uk) at the National Office. Information will also be available on the Conference Bulletin Board in the Members Area of the website. Please note that although the scheme is available on a first come, first served basis until 30th September, funds are available to pay for a limited number of wills and once these are exhausted, the scheme will close.

## Secretarial Returns, Well Done!

As of the 17th April 2018, an impressive 157 Conferences have completed and submitted their Secretarial Return! We understand this is a task no one relishes and would like to say thank you to everyone who has supplied their returns so far, and thank you in advance to everyone who is catching up. If you have yet to complete your return, the deadline for submission is 1st June 2018. All returns must be submitted by this date in order for us to complete the audit process on time and without additional costs to the society. If you require further information or assistance with your return please contact Teddy Curran, Database Officer, at National Office: [teddyc@svp.org.uk](mailto:teddyc@svp.org.uk).

## Treasurers Returns Update

As the Society's financial year-end is 31st March 2018 we would ask that Conference Treasurers work to get their quarterly and year-end returns sent in to Finance as soon as possible. Congratulations to Plymouth Central Council who are completely up-to-date for December and have already supplied 61% of their March return!

## NatWest Bank Update

Preparations for moving the Society's banking to NatWest are continuing and NatWest are currently preparing the underlying infrastructure for the setting up of individual Conference and project accounts, which they expect to complete in the next three weeks. We will be adopting a phased approach to the migration of day-to-day banking from the Co-op to NatWest on a Central Council by Central Council basis. We will be writing to treasurers within the next few weeks to set out the detailed timetable as it applies to their Conference and requesting confirmation of information as to contact and signatory information.



# Membership development explained

**SVP member Jeremy Austin talks to the Society's Membership Support & Development Manager, Kieran Knights, about the work of his department.**

**What is membership development?** That is the first question I put to Kieran Knights, as we discuss the duties and responsibilities of his department. "Gosh, where do I start?" Kieran responds. "In one very specific sense, 'development' means training," he explains. "The word 'training' has very much gone out of fashion – I think because it calls to mind some rather negative and out-dated images. In people's professional lives they now undergo what is called 'continuous professional development' rather than training and so it is with the SVP – we are seeking to achieve continuous membership development rather than just an induction when they're new and that's it."

Running under the auspices of the Membership Development Committee chaired by Trustee, Ann Harris, its training flagship, Faith in Action, is intended to be an informative and motivational module for all members, new and old.

"Usually taking place on a Saturday morning, Faith in Action starts by examining the spirituality that's at the heart of our Society and then focuses on how that translates into the practical help we give to people in need," Kieran says. "Finally, it looks at some of the issues and challenges members might face in the course of their work. All of our training materials are written by active members of the Society who give up their time to be members of our Membership Development Committee. We couldn't achieve what has been achieved without them."

Kieran reveals that many more members have been found to act as trainers around the country so Faith in Action can be run regularly in different locations. "However, there are still some pockets where it is not available and trainers are travelling around trying to fill the gaps, so we could still do with more trainers if anyone is willing to volunteer."

But Faith in Action is only the start of the training revolution that is underway in the Society. For example, more training modules are in development, addressing the different roles of the Conference officers as well as

District and Central Council Presidents, and training on the history of the SVP and the day-to-day operations of Conferences. Some of this will take the form of courses and some will be webinars or downloadable resources available from the website.



In addition, there will be more subject-specific training like the recent Dementia Workshop, and Safeguarding, Financial and Data Protection sessions.

"We are also providing increased information for new and existing members in several other formats," Kieran points out. "For example, we have a set of Fact Sheets that cover a range of different topics like members' insurance, food poverty and funeral poverty, lots of spiritual resources and a new Members' Essentials pocket handbook is on the way."

**So, Membership Development is all about training and information then?** "Well yes," Kieran says, hesitatingly. "But it's not only that. "Membership Development is also about recruitment – attracting new members to the SVP, starting new Conferences and trying to save 'at-risk' Conferences where the number of members has got dangerously low."

Among Kieran's responsibilities is the production of resources to help members with their own recruitment activities – things like posters, lectern addresses and copy for parish bulletins. He also distributes a monthly members' e-bulletin, Spread the Word, devoted to recruitment news, tips and advice.

"It's only sent to members who have registered for it," Kieran explains. "We don't want anybody complaining that they're being sent stuff they don't want, so people have to ask to get it although they can unregister at any time. I'm happy to say that its monthly distribution has been steadily growing over the past two years."

Another job of the department is to provide Membership Development Officers (MDOs) who start new

Conferences or try to help 'at-risk' Conferences in Central Councils who are able to fund this initiative. There are currently four part-time MDOs - Lance Philpott in Hallam CC, Brian Jones in Cardiff CC, Garrett MacDonnell in Nottingham CC, and Kieran Knights in Southwark CC.

"As well as managing the team I'm one of the MDOs myself," Kieran explains. "It's interesting that the four of us are completely different individuals with different backgrounds and temperaments, yet we all have the same commitment to increasing the number of Conferences and members because we know that the more members we have the more people in need we can help."

**So does this strategy work?** "Well, it's a sad fact of modern life that the number of church-going Catholics has been in long-term decline. Perhaps unsurprisingly this was mirrored in the long-term gradual decline in SVP membership," Kieran points out. "However, in 2014 that long-term decline in the Society ended. Membership has risen 5% since then, so we must be doing something right. "But this is where I need to pay tribute to all the hard work of members in recruiting new people to join the SVP," he adds. "Nobody joins the SVP to get involved in recruitment - or training for that matter - we join to help people in need. But members realise that if we don't find replacements for ourselves to be the active members of next year and next decade, there won't be an SVP to help anybody."

**This seems a good point to end our discussion. But then one last question comes to mind: what do you do in your spare time, Kieran, when you're not working for the SVP?** "Well, in my spare time I'm a member of the SVP Conference at St George's Cathedral, Southwark, in south London. So I'm an SVP man through and through. I'm not the only member to have found that the SVP has taken over my life. But can you think of a better cause to devote your life to?"

## Spread the Word

Do you receive Spread the Word yet? This colourful monthly e-bulletin contains lots of recruitment news, tips and advice and is sent free by the National Office to any member who registers for it. To register for Spread the Word, simply email: [Membership@svp.org.uk](mailto:Membership@svp.org.uk). You can subsequently unregister at any time.



## A new team of MDOs

Three new part-time Membership Development Officers have been appointed to start new Conferences and help recruit members for 'at-risk' Conferences in the Central Councils of Hallam, Nottingham and Cardiff. This follows the success of a similar role in Southwark CC. The new threesome (pictured, from top to bottom) are Lance Philpott in Hallam, who is a

former deputy headteacher, Brian Jones in Cardiff who has previously run a homeless shelter, and Garrett MacDonnell in Nottingham who has previously worked for charities in Ireland. Their email addresses are: [LanceP@svp.org.uk](mailto:LanceP@svp.org.uk), [BrianJ@svp.org.uk](mailto:BrianJ@svp.org.uk) and [GarrettM@svp.org.uk](mailto:GarrettM@svp.org.uk)

If you are interested in exploring having similar roles in our Central Council please contact Kieran Knights at National Office: [KieranK@svp.org.uk](mailto:KieranK@svp.org.uk)

**Find out more** Explore the Membership Development resources on the SVP website - [www.svp.org.uk](http://www.svp.org.uk). Enter the members' area (if you don't yet have a password call National Office to get one) and then open the Membership Development section.

You'll find there are three distinct pages:

- **Recruitment** contains lots of downloadable resources to help with recruitment activity including posters, fliers, lectern addresses and copy for parish bulletins.
- **Knowledge & Skills** has information about the SVP's training - or 'ongoing membership development' - as well as providing downloadable resources.
- **The Forum** is an environment where members can ask questions, raise issues and share ideas. There are also 14 Fact Sheets offering a wealth of useful information for new and existing members.

In addition, don't forget all the forms you'll need can be found in SVP Policies & Procedures. If you have any questions or comments relating to Membership Development, email [Membership@svp.org.uk](mailto:Membership@svp.org.uk) or write to Membership Development, SVP National Office, Romero House, 55 Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7JB.



# The Big Lottery Fund Awards for All programme

**The Big Lottery “Awards for All” programme is a quick and simple way to apply for small Lottery grants of between £300 and £10,000. Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception Conference, Aspull, near Wigan has secured Awards for All funding for four projects in the last six years. Margaret Riley, Conference President, explains how.**

Our Conference has been active since 1981 and is strongly supported by our parish priest, Father Kevin Foulkes. We have seven members all of whom, apart from one, are aged 65 and over, with some members over the age of 80. We carry out the usual SVP activities: visiting the elderly and lonely, giving lifts to Mass and medical appointments, organising parties and Masses for the Anointing of the Sick; we have two twinned Conferences in India and Sudan and have attended Conferences on improving how we and the parish interact with people with dementia.

Since 2012 we have applied to the Big Lottery Fund Awards for All programme for grants of £10k to fund projects in our community. We have run four projects in all. The SVP definition of poverty is wide. Our community isn't characterised by a great deal of financial poverty and we receive few requests for financial help. However, there are other needs, such as loneliness and social exclusion, experienced by some older people and some parents, including single parents. There can be a need for greater involvement in activities that build confidence and self-esteem in our children, whose parents may not be able to provide the opportunities enjoyed by many. The gap between older and younger generations may need narrowing. Families may need to feel more closely involved and active participants in their local community. With these factors in mind, we have tailored each bid accordingly. The values of the Awards for All programme and the SVP are often well aligned: combating isolation, challenging negative stereotypes, increasing social cohesion and interaction, always without regard to faith, ethnicity, status or sexual orientation. Person-to-person contact also features strongly.

With such a large grant of money, it has been possible to run a whole range of clubs for both children and adults, including drama, art, crafts, ICT, science, cookery, outdoor activities such as golf, riding, skating and archery, as well as ceramics, floristry and watercolour painting and social get-togethers for older people. We have also been able to train primary-age children to become young leaders and assist in the various activities, thus promoting their own confidence and independence.

A very positive outcome is that some of the participants have gone on to form their own groups and have secured Big Lottery funding to continue their activities independently. This has helped develop a close community which continues to meet together and enjoy the benefits of this support. Once the bid has been submitted, accepted and granted, it is very important to keep as close as possible to the content and spirit of the original bid, although there is a certain latitude for alteration provided the Big Lottery agree with any changes. The grant is ring-fenced and is “restricted income”, and the Conference treasurer must keep detailed accounts of expenditure, making sure that the income and expenditure is distinguishable in the quarterly returns from general Conference income and expenditure.

Towards the end of the project, the Big Lottery asks recipients to complete a monitoring form and reminds them that all monies must be spent, otherwise any remaining amount must be returned. If the remaining money isn't too large, the recipient is usually allowed to keep the money provided it undertakes to use it for a specified and approved purpose.

The programme is open to any charity or branch of a charity which has its own decision-making body, bank account and a constitution and decisions are usually made within 10 weeks. For more information visit [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/under10k](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/under10k)

## Conference fundraising

These days fundraising is often characterised in terms of technique or methodology – as if the discovery and application of some magical or failsafe formula will somehow provide the answer to all our fundraising needs. However, not only is that approach doomed to failure, as many who have tried and failed will tell you, but it misses the point. The fundraising successes on this page tell a different story – one about the importance of relevance, innovation and relationship building in our local communities. Our Society is at the forefront of a continually evolving story of how communities find new ways to respond to local needs.

Funders like and respect that, and by inviting them to support that work you enable them to be part of it. The Big Lottery Fund has supported the work of the Immaculate Conception Conference in Aspall on so many occasions because it enables it to find innovative ways of meeting its objective of empowering local communities. The manager and staff of the Co-op store in Oakdale now participate personally in the tea and chat sessions run by St Mary's Conference. The more open your project is to your local community, the more integrity it will have and the more you invest in building local relationships, the more funders will want to help.



The SVP Conference in Poole was presented with a cheque from the Co-op

## More Tea and Chat!

St Mary's SVP Conference, Poole was given £5,245 by the Co-op for more SVP Tea and Chat sessions in the latest round of Co-op funding for community causes. The funding will mean more local older people will be able to enjoy an afternoon every month with refreshments, activities, books, games and entertainment with new friends.

A cheque was presented on Saturday 25th November 2017 at the Co-op store in Oakdale, where SVP members gave out invitations to customers to pass on to elderly relatives and neighbours. The extra funds will help provide equipment and transport for the disabled, plus a wider range of activities and entertainment for all the members. The club has been running at St Mary's RC church hall in Poole for about 4 years and over 40 regularly attend, ranging in age from early sixties to mid-nineties!

## Warming Winter Party

Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception SVP Conference, Bolton held a wonderful Winter Party for Senior Citizens, funded by a Big Lottery grant. A total of 32 older people enjoyed the event which included Number Bingo and Musical Bingo, a picture quiz, hot pot and peas, cakes and tea and everyone went home with chocolates or biscuits.





## Safeguarding



# The little child and the starfish: will you save just one?

**If you don't know the tale of the little boy and the starfish, permit me a few moments to tell you the story.**

*Once upon a time, a little boy and his grandfather were walking along the strand after a storm. The boy ran ahead as little boys do and the grandfather smiled as he watched him run back and forth to the edge of the now calm sea. When the grandfather finally caught up, he asked his grandson what he was doing. "I'm throwing starfish back into the sea because they'll die back here on the sand".*

*The grandfather looked around and saw that there were hundreds, even thousands of starfish stranded up on the beach. Sadly, he said to his grandson "but there are too many starfish to save even if you stayed here all day until the tide comes in". "But grandfather", said the little boy holding up one of the tiny creatures, "it doesn't matter that I can't save them all if I can just save this one".*

Last December J. M., one of our wonderful shop managers attended the Society's annual safeguarding training day where Mike Duthie, from the Santa Marta Group, spoke passionately about the scourge of modern day slavery (human trafficking) which exists even in the UK. As an example, he mentioned men and women brought over from eastern Europe on the promise of a better life but then kept captive in nail salons and on remote farms. Their passports were seized and they were housed in unheated caravans and abused by unscrupulous bosses.

On her way home that evening, J. passed a car wash that she had passed a hundred times before over the years without really noticing all of the men working so hard out in the rain, and even snow, furiously shining up cars with rags as they came out of the wash. She stopped and saw how poorly dressed they were and how quietly they worked as if they were afraid to speak in front of their severe looking supervisor who stayed outside watching them all the time. She felt very badly for these poor souls. But when she noticed that this business had no sign, the wheels began to turn in her head with the realisation that these workers might be part of the machinery of modern day slavery just as Mike Duthie had described.

When she reached home, J. went straight to her computer and searched for the Santa Marta Group website where she found a link to a reporting helpline. She had never done anything like this before and was really afraid of making a mistake. But with hands shaking, remembering Mike's talk, she reported her concerns to the helpline team.

A week later on her way home, J. was startled to see that after years of operation, the car wash had suddenly closed. Mike Duthie is now working with all of the authorities who might have been involved in the closure of the business to help us learn about the fate of the men once working there.

So back to the starfish. While there are thousands of businesses in the UK exploiting trafficked men, women and sometimes even children, J. was brave enough to save perhaps just one. A very Vincentian thing to do.

**Catherine Kerr, National Safeguarding Officer**

The Santa Marta Group is an alliance of international police chiefs and bishops from around the world working with the endorsement of Pope Francis to eradicate human trafficking. You can contact them at: [santamartagroup.com](http://santamartagroup.com)

## Food Safety: good practice for Conferences

**Everyone who handles food must make sure that it is safe to eat. There will always be food safety hazards but they can be controlled if we understand how food becomes contaminated.**

James Bellamy, Conference President of Our Lady's SVP in Wellingborough, provides some tips on safe food preparation.

Our Conference started a Saturday drop-in for local residents in a deprived area of Northampton and before we started operating we were all required to gain a Level 2 Award in Food Safety in Catering awarded by the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health. We learnt a lot from the course and some of the key areas are summarised below.

### Taking Responsibility for Food Safety

As a food handler we play a very important part in protecting consumers from harm. High standards of food safety allow consumers to enjoy their food without experiencing illness, injury or other problems and poor standards can lead to all kinds of harm and even death. If we get it wrong even at our small Conference event then customers may complain about the food and become ill and we could be subject to legal claims.

### Common Food Hazard examples

- **Physical** – could be hair, bits of shell or bone or dust or dirt
- **Chemical** – could be cleaning products, pesticides on fruit or vegetables
- **Microbial** – bacteria through cross contamination (using a knife to cut raw meat then the same knife for vegetables)
- **Allergenic** – nuts or dairy products. For example ingredients for cakes should be listed and on display.

High Risks foods are those that are ready to eat and may include chicken, fish, seafood, egg products (quiche), rice salads and dairy based products like fresh cream cakes. Raw foods must be kept away from high risk foods.

### Keeping yourself clean and hygienic

Everyone working with food must maintain the highest standards of personal hygiene and hands must be washed before handling food, between handling raw and high risk foods and after. Washing of hands needs to be thorough, not just a splash under the tap.



Disposable paper towels should be used. You must be fit and well to prepare food and any cuts or sores could pass bacteria.

### Keeping work areas clean and hygienic

Cleaning is a process which keeps the area free from dirt, grease and contamination and it should be carried out frequently – it applies to food contact surfaces and others you may come into contact with like clothing, handles on doors or your mobile phone. Make sure that all food is stored away from the area being cleaned to avoid any contamination.

### Preventing Contamination – key rules

- Keep food areas clean and tidy
- Regularly clean and disinfect preparation areas and equipment
- Keep food covered when not handling
- Handle food as little as possible
- Store and display food correctly
- Regularly remove rubbish and food waste into the correct bins

There are many important things to learn about food hygiene and there are courses available in your area running all the time. This can help your kitchen at home and what you prepare for your Conference.

We recommend that you sign up on a course and make life safer for the beneficiaries you provide food for.



# Shining a light on poverty in today's world

**The SVP National Office is settling in to its new environment in the CAFOD Offices, Romero House. In a few days it will be Oscar Romero's feast day and this year no doubt the occasion will be a particular cause for celebration given the fact that on March 7th Pope Francis approved a miracle attributed to Blessed Oscar Romero, meaning that he will be canonised.**

Although they lived in different times the lives of both Blessed Oscar Romero and St Vincent were marked by their dedication to the poor.

Blessed Oscar Romero was once asked to explain the phrase "option for the poor" which comes from Catholic Social Teaching. He replied...

"I offer you this by way of example. A building is on fire and you're watching it burn, standing and wondering if everyone is safe. Then someone tells you that your mother and your sister are inside that building. Your attitude changes completely. You're frantic; your mother and sister are burning and you'd do anything

to rescue them even at the cost of getting charred. That's what it means to be truly committed. If we look at poverty from the outside, as if we're looking at a fire, that's not to opt for the poor, no matter how concerned we may be. We should get inside as if our own mother and sister were burning. Indeed it's Christ who is there, hungry and suffering."

Oscar Romero made the ultimate sacrifice and was murdered for his passion for justice for the poor. Vincent lived a relatively long life, but dedicated himself to the service of the poor, eschewing the wealth and riches he originally sought as a young man.

Few can emulate such self-sacrifice but the St Vincent de Paul Society enables a lay vocation of service to the poor, accessible to all. Hopefully the canonisation of Blessed Oscar Romero will be an opportunity to shine the light on poverty in today's world. The SVP in turn can challenge the laity to "opt for the poor" through service, as it seeks to recruit new members to do its work.

**Elizabeth Palmer, CEO**

## Remembering those we have lost

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

**Peter George Willis** 1927-2017: Former National President. Peter sadly passed away in November 2017. Peter Taylor reflects on his life and work. Peter began his journey as a member of the SVP in his home town of Bedford, alert to the work of the Society through his role as a prison officer. Peter became President of Northampton Central Council in the late sixties, after which he was elected National President for England and Wales in 1972. During this time women were admitted to full membership of the Society, a decision which has served the SVP so well. Peter was born on Christmas day 1927, joined the Bank of England after leaving school and did National Service in the RAF, until demobilisation in 1948 when he entered Guy's Hospital to train as a dental surgeon. Peter met his wife Dilys at Guy's; they married in 1954 and went on to have four children. Peter was a family man through and through and would do anything for his family. In later years he became a trustee and secretary of David Young's Charity, and, with his wife, was involved in working with the deaf. He was a lovely man in all senses and will be missed by his friends, family, SVP, Catenians and many others. May he rest in peace.

**Deacon Norman Carew:** A faithful and long-serving spiritual adviser both to Our Lady Star of the Sea and St Joseph's Conference, and to Wallasey District Council for the last twenty one years, he will be greatly missed.

**Kathleen Connelly:** Long-term former member of the Church of Our Lady, Leamington Spa, and a great supporter of the Parish. Kathleen passed away on 10th January 2018. May she rest in peace.

**Tony Coogan:** Auxiliary volunteer at the Manchester Furniture Store for many years.

**Fred Dalton:** Faithful SVP member for many years and Secretary to St. Thomas More Conference Sheffield for the last twenty years.

**Tony Gray:** An active SVP member for over 60 years and member of St Charles Conference, Gosforth since 1962. Tony was a gentle and kind man who will be greatly missed.

**James (Jim) McEvoy:** A dedicated member of the SVP for more than three decades and an active member of St Augustine's Conference. He will be greatly missed.

**Pat Mills:** Long time member and Secretary, St Mary Mother of God Conference, Hornchurch.

**Marie O'Connor:** A founding member of the St James, Bootle Conference, she will be greatly missed.

**Jim Shaw:** Secretary and Acting President of Salford and Salford West District Council.

**Eileen Simpson:** Former member of English Martyrs' Conference, Hassop and Bakewell.

**Ray Stakemire:** A retired and long serving SVP member of the St Francis of Assisi, Shefford Conference, Ray passed away on Ash Wednesday aged 90.

**Glynn Watson:** A very long serving member of the Our Lady of Mount Carmel and St George Conferences in Enfield, Westminster Diocese.

## SVP National Pilgrimage for the Sick 2018

**All members of the SVP family, as well as the sick, their carers and supporters are warmly invited to join our annual pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham on Sunday 1st July 2018.**

Rector of the Shrine Mgr John Armitage will celebrate Mass at mid-day, which will be followed by the Anointing of the Sick, and (after lunch) Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

For information about the Shrine's facilities, and advice about parking and more, see [www.walsingham.org.uk](http://www.walsingham.org.uk) or contact the Pilgrimage Co-ordinator, Damian Forshaw: [pilgrimage@walsingham.org.uk](mailto:pilgrimage@walsingham.org.uk); telephone **01328 820 495**.



East Anglia Central Council President Michael McMahon ([mjmcm25@gmail.com](mailto:mjmcm25@gmail.com)) would be grateful to know as soon as possible how many priests who can administer the Sacrament of the Sick plan to attend.



## St Scholastica's Retreat

An Almshouse in the heart of Princes Risborough

### Vacant Flats Available

St Scholastica's Retreat is an Almshouse for practising Catholics who are aged 60 years or over, who are of limited financial means, and who are capable of living independently in a self-contained flat. We have 36 modern self-contained flats in an attractive position with shared spacious gardens. The Retreat is in easy walking distance of the parish church and all amenities.

For more information, please visit our website: [www.stscholasticas.co.uk](http://www.stscholasticas.co.uk) and/or contact

The Warden, Revd Seán Duffy on 01844 344437 at 27, The Retreat, Princes Risborough, HP27 0JG

[info@stscholasticas.co.uk](mailto:info@stscholasticas.co.uk)

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## 2018 Dates for the diary

### Board Meetings

#### Thur 10th May

London National Office

#### Fri 6th July

London National Office

#### Wed 5th September

London National Office

#### Fri 26th – Sat 27th October

Hinsley Hall, Leeds (Residential)

#### Fri 23rd November

Hinsley Hall, Leeds (before National Council)

### National Council Meetings

#### Fri 29th June Venue TBC

(SVP International President is visiting)

#### Fri 23rd – Sat 24th November

Hinsley Hall, Leeds

## Do you have a story to share?

Next deadline for sending news and information for Vincentian Concern Summer Edition 2018 is **20th June**.

Letters and articles for inclusion in the magazine should be submitted to Anita Boniface: **SVP, Romero House, 55 Westminster Bridge Road, London, SE1 7JB**

or email: [anitab@svp.org.uk](mailto:anitab@svp.org.uk)

## 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 those 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 & 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 poverty in whatever form. Works include visiting the lonely, soup runs, food banks, 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 nearly 500,000 visits to families and individuals in need. Working face to face with those we seek to help, SVP members develop lasting relationships with those they serve, and gain a rare insight into the lives of those people they help.

## Advertise with us

The Vincentian Concern is now accepting advertisements. If you or someone you know would like to advertise your business in the VC, please get in touch with Ken Madine at National Office on **020 7703 3030** or [kenm@svp.org.uk](mailto:kenm@svp.org.uk)

### Editorial Policy



## St Vincent de Paul Society

England and Wales

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