

VincentianConcern



St Vincent de Paul Society (England and Wales)

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Building a Better World



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Embracing the globe in a network of charity



June was a very busy month with a focus on SVP international matters.

Claz Gomez, our National Young Vincentian Coordinator, visited Salamanca to attend the International Youth Gathering. Thanks to your help, we also paid for youth representatives from some of our twinned countries to attend. As Claz reminded the National Council last week, these young people are our leaders of tomorrow and we should all embrace and encourage that.

I represented SVP England and Wales at the meeting of the International Council General (CGI), also in Salamanca. It was heartwarming to meet members of the CGI and other National Presidents from around the world. It is clear that we share many of the same hopes, plans and challenges - and I really felt part of a true "network of charity".

I was fortunate enough to listen to several homilies and reflections by Father Robert Maloney CM, Spiritual Advisor for CGI, that he gave at the International Council. I particularly enjoyed his thoughts on the spirituality of SVP members; "a vibrant communal spirituality that blends prayer and action". Father Maloney described this spirituality as having certain distinct characteristics:

**It is Christ-centered • It makes simplicity a core value
It is grounded in humility • It expresses itself in creative charity**

On "creative charity" Father Maloney referred us to Plato's "The Phaedrus", or his dialogue "On the Soul" and to the winged souls that defy the laws of gravity, see beyond the usual boundaries and view things in a universal context. They are not restricted to a small world or set in a prescribed time. Father Maloney described St Vincent de Paul and Blessed Frédéric Ozanam as "winged souls" and invited us all to "fly as they did". I appreciated this call and the reminder to see beyond the here and now, to engage in creative charity for the good of those we serve.

Also in June we had the pleasure of welcoming to England and Wales our 16th President General, Renato Lima de Oliveira. I was delighted to be able to show him many of our fantastic projects in Newcastle and Leeds, as well as introduce him to our members in those areas. On a visit to a care home in Newcastle with local Conference members from St Philips, Renato asked one of the members what the SVP brought to the residents and he was given the response "time and love". Renato was very struck with these words and vowed to repeat them when visiting other parts of the world.

Renato also passed on his thanks to the members of SVP England and Wales for their tremendous support to our twinned countries. We give more in Twinnage contributions than any other country and I too would like to thank you for your tremendous support for the "poorest of the poor".

May I wish you a very happy remainder of the summer and remember to let your soul fly.

God bless. Yours in St Vincent and Blessed Frédéric.

Helen O'Shea, National President

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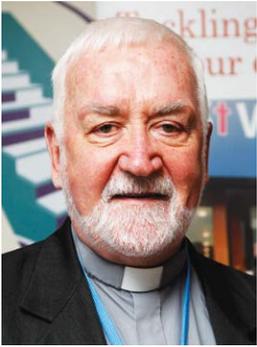
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Welcoming the stranger?

On July 8th 2013, just three months after his election, Pope Francis made his first journey from the Vatican to the small Mediterranean island of Lampedusa.

The island had been the tragic scene of a sea disaster, which left hundreds of migrant people dead despite over a hundred being rescued by the islanders. All had been seeking a better future in Europe and were victims of the callousness of people traffickers, who had taken great sums of money from each of them.

Pope Francis used the visit to highlight the contemporary evil of exploiting the poor and becoming rich on their blood money. He also strongly criticised the lack of response and compassion shown to the victims by Christians at all levels of society.

In our globalised world we see disasters evening after evening on our news programmes; suicide bombings, earthquakes, plane crashes, fire disasters, war and bombings accompanied by streams of frightened refugees clutching babies, and laden with packs containing all their possessions as they flee their destroyed homes and search for safety. Quite simply, as the Holy Father points out, we have grown globally indifferent. Self-interest has replaced compassion. These tragic victims are no longer a brother or sister to be loved, but simply someone who disturbs my life and my comfort.

Five years on and the situation has not improved, in fact it has worsened. In addition to our general indifference, we now have growing political opposition. Several countries have elected leaders that are implementing anti-migrant policies. As I write we are faced with the shameful spectacle of the rescue ship Aquarius with 629 migrants escaping hardship, hunger and poverty in their own countries and often false imprisonment in Libya, all dreaming of a better life in Europe, but denied admission first in Italy, then Malta - both Catholic countries - and finally offered a safe haven in Spain. European states are erecting hundreds of miles of fences guarded by armed forces. The message is clear: 'Keep Out, you are not wanted - go home!'



Pope Francis asks each of us the question from the first book of the Bible; *What have you done? Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground.* (Genesis 4:10). We immediately think 'it isn't me, I have nothing to do with it. It must be somebody else'. But how have we allowed ourselves to become so accustomed to the suffering of others that we remain unconcerned by it all? Opinion poll after poll suggests that there are many people in this country who are greatly concerned by the whole affair, but who feel unable to do anything about it.

This raises the question: What can we do as an individual or as a Conference?

Let the Gospel teaching lead you to a concrete change of heart. Inform yourself well on the situation, read about it. Just imagine you were a migrant cleaned out of your money, living through dangers and meeting hostility and hatred. How does it feel? Give practical help where you can, locally through the SVP or in association with other groups who are actively engaged. Raise your concern and turn your concern into action.

Don't remain silent. Unite your voice with those who are concerned and pressurise local and national authorities. It only requires each local authority in the country to take in 3 children a year to have 20,000 settled by 2020. Why is this not happening? Can you make it happen?

Fr Paul C Roche CM



Sarah Teather and Jesuit Refugee Service

One of the things Sarah Teather loves about her job as Director of the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) UK is “unleashing a huge torrent of energy” in the refugees and asylum seekers her organisation provides with volunteering opportunities.

The former Education Minister says:

“ You have people who have not been allowed to work sometimes for years and they have all these pent up skills and the desire to contribute. So when you give people an opportunity it’s hugely creative.”

Internationally, the Jesuit Refugee Service accompanies, serves and advocates for refugees and forcibly displaced people. JRS UK specifically works with destitute refugees and asylum seekers – those struggling to gain recognition of their refugee status – and people in immigration detention. For the former, it runs a hosting scheme and a weekly day centre where refugees can come for a hot meal and a place to relax, and supports different activities through the week. The contribution of refugee volunteers is vital to this work. Sarah says asylum seekers often have “huge skills that they’d like to be able to contribute to others.” Often they come into the country expecting to be able to work and “pay their way” despite the great trauma they may have endured and Sarah says that “if they’re denied that opportunity it’s really hard... It’s hard for people. They can’t support their families, their sense of purpose, their sense of belonging.”

So Sarah and JRS organise volunteering roles within the organisation. For example, some refugee volunteers provide pastoral care to other refugees; others help to run the office. Part of her passion and committed belief in their resourcefulness and contribution comes from her respect for their resilience and ability to endure the hardest of circumstances.

“If you’ve managed to flee your country, organise yourself, get out of a situation, you were probably resilient before and you still require a level of resilience. You may have also acquired great trauma, and you might arrive with physically nothing and carry wounds internally, but you



Sarah Teather (right) with a client, known as a ‘friend’ of the JRS UK

probably also have massive banks of reserves because if you’re the kind of person who’s managed to do that and survive you’ve got something quite important to give back.”

JRS UK appreciates that often peoples’ backgrounds include trauma, persecution, loss, grief and torture. Therefore Sarah feels it is imperative that these ‘friends’ – JRS UK’s term for the refugees they accompany – are provided with a sense of welcome, of safety and a place they “feel at home”.

JRS UK is a place where “people make friends and form relationships” Sarah tells me. “It’s important to feel yourself at home especially when you’ve lost your (own) home.” She continues: “People can be themselves, whoever they are... there’s the practical stuff that people need and the practical help, but sometimes the most important aspects of what we do is walking with people and getting to know them. We create spaces where they can be themselves and flourish as people.”

Part of this is JRS UK’s open and non judgemental ethos. While JRS UK is an organisation founded by and affiliated with the Jesuits, Sarah is keen to point out that it is a welcoming place for people of all faiths and none. “We don’t proselytise to the people we serve. We will serve people whether they are Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, Hindu. We don’t ask questions and we serve them”.

This non-judgemental, welcoming and open approach to people is itself part of a “witness” to the Gospel. Sarah says: “I think it’s really important that we witness the... value of each individual life and the gifts people bring. That in a sense is our witness to the Gospel and we understand that and see that very clearly – that’s part and parcel of working for the Kingdom, to go out and try to spread those values

to others... the first thing is to make sure that we create a society that's welcoming to refugees."

Much of the work of JRS UK in witnessing to the Catholic faith is done in conjunction with the Catholic community such as members of religious orders, and parishioners on the ground. Despite the harsh treatment by the "dominant voices" in the media, Sarah says that the general public, including parishioners, have a different approach.

Sarah suggests that those within the Church and within ordinary parishes often have "a kind of instinctive sense that they don't really like what the media is saying about refugees and they are... keen to welcome asylum seekers and refugees and are not sure quite how to go about it, not sure what to do... they come forward in their local area and say 'this matters to me, I care about this, I care about my community'."

Sarah explains that JRS UK is helped greatly by Catholic parishioners putting in time as volunteers, or making financial donations. "So we're recipients of people's generosity," she says. Often this desire to serve others "comes out of their faith. They understand that this is the way they live out their faith and they're looking for ways of doing that. At different stages of your life you have different opportunities and money and skills. Some people... with young children might help by campaigning or letter writing, and at a later stage people who are retired... take a much more active role in volunteering.

“ We’re happy to take people at different stages in their life who can give different things.”

Sarah herself is a committed Catholic whose life entered a different stage when she left politics and joined JRS. Reflecting on her political life, starting at the age of 29 when she was first elected MP for Brent East she explains: "When I was first elected I had had a period away from attending Mass and going to church. But the night I was first elected was in a sense the night at which I fully re-engaged with my faith. It was the realisation that I had been given an opportunity to do something that was not about me and my own story at that stage even though I was very much at the centre of media attention." She says she had "absolute clarity that this was not about me and that I had a job of service to do and I was being given the most enormous, extraordinary opportunity to do it and this enormous opportunity and the expectations of other people meant that I had to engage with my faith."

She continues to say: "I suppose it was a kind of immediate sense of desire to connect with God, to pray about it, to offer it, to understand how to use it, and that required re-engagement with my faith. And I never stepped away again. In fact, throughout my political journey there were so many challenges and tests, each one different, and the only mechanism I really had for understanding how to respond was engaging more deeply with my faith. It became progressively more important in that time."

What helped her both working through challenging times in government and in working with JRS UK was her faith and her spiritual direction by the Jesuits. Sarah was a member of a young Christian Life Community (CLC) group, as well as being involved in the young adult Mass at a Jesuit church. Following the guidance of her spiritual director she decided to follow a calling to do the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises on a 30 day silent retreat "partly because (she) was curious" and because her spiritual director had "sown the seeds".

Sarah describes the month long retreat at Loyola Hall as "an intense experience" and says she reaped the benefits for at least two years after it had been completed. "I still gain from it. Memories, experiences, nuanced now in a sense, but built on the foundations of what happened during the 30 days."

It is perhaps part of a natural progression then that Sarah now heads up JRS, an organisation that is essentially Ignatian. Leading a team doing practical caring work of befriending refugees and asylum seekers, she is looking to collaborate with other charities such as the St Vincent de Paul Society in order to pool experience and resources so as to welcome and befriend more vulnerable people.

Before the end of the interview with Sarah she gives a little insight into her belief and commitment towards collaborative work. Holding a copy of the 'Archbishop Oscar Romero prayer' entitled 'A Step Along the Way' and written by Bishop Ken Untener of Saginaw, she says "I am very fond of this prayer. In a sense your job is to sow seeds. You don't necessarily get to see the grand picture. You're not necessarily the person who has the grand plan." Sarah concludes:

“ We’re workers, we do our bit, we don’t get to see the bigger picture. We’re part and parcel of something larger.”

Anita Boniface, Senior Media & Communications Officer, St Vincent de Paul Society



A Warm Welcome at Sheffield Hallam CC Festival Meeting

Sheffield Hallam Central Council were delighted to welcome National President Helen O'Shea to the recent Festival Meeting held on Sunday 13th May at the Diocesan Pastoral Centre. Mass was celebrated by Bishop Ralph in St Charles Church, following which Helen gave an excellent presentation entitled "SVP: Fit for the Future".



National President Helen O'Shea with Sr. Pauline Mulcrone, Hallam Central Council President



SVP attends the Kendal Unity Festival

Holy Trinity and St George, Kendal Conference had a successful day at the Kendal Unity Festival on 23rd June in Kendal Town Centre. The Conferences, and the local Mini Vinnies group, held a stall alongside many other organisations and religions which looked particularly dazzling with personalised SVP bunting.

Holy Apostles Pimlico Conference Celebrate the Royal Wedding

Holy Apostles Pimlico Conference celebrated the Royal Wedding on 19th May by inviting people to watch the event on a big screen, providing refreshments and a raffle. Over 100 people attended in the Holy Apostles Church hall which was decorated with bunting and flags and £430 was raised towards funds.



Bunting hand made by Kendal Mini Vinnies

St Teresa's takes to the Thames



The SVP Conference at St Teresa's Church, Beaconsfield, organised a trip to Henley on Tuesday 19th June for the attendees of the weekly Coffee Morning. After a coach ride to Henley, there was a boat ride on the Thames funded by a donation from the family of Geoffrey Spencer in appreciation of the support given to Geoffrey by the SVP in his final years. A good time was had by all.

From Woodbridge to Walsingham

Wendy Hardinge and the members of the St Thomas of Canterbury, Woodbridge Conference visited Walsingham for the SVP Pilgrimage of the sick. They also took the day to celebrate the 90th birthday of Peter Grimer.



Words of Prayer from Janet Convey

Loving Father in Heaven,

We believe that your servant, Frédéric, after a lifetime of devoted service to those in need around him, and further afield, is by your side, reaping his eternal reward.

Through the Society of St Vincent de Paul, which he and his friends founded, we today seek to continue this service.

We ask that you would encourage and inspire us by granting our special request... to further the cause for the canonisation of Blessed Frédéric.

We pray with all our hearts for... and ask our prayers through Our beloved Lord Jesus Christ, His Blessed Mother, Mary, St Joseph and all your holy Angels and Saints in Heaven.

Amen

These kind words were contributed by Janet Convey, we hope you find inspiration and motivation in the prayer. Thank you Janet.



Hard at Work: Sara, Helen, Krys, Geraldine and Liz running the kitchen

Food for Thought

Working closely with other providers of services is one of the current challenges of our times for SVP Conferences. Members of Rochdale District Council have been building a bridge by providing slap-up, wholesome meals at the local homeless accommodation in Rochdale.

Leopold Court, run by Rochdale Borough Housing, provides temporary accommodation to around 30 residents at any one time. The SVP became aware that its large catering kitchen was little used so it offered to provide occasional evening meals.

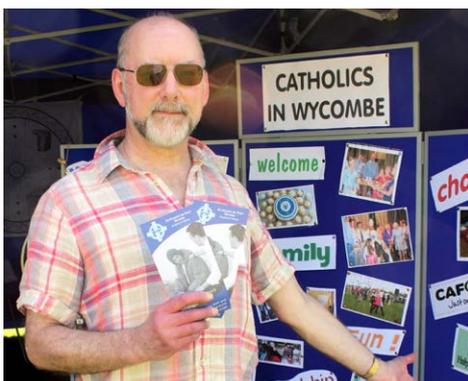
With a careful eye on food hygiene procedures, small groups of members from different Conferences in the District have been putting on two course meals for a year now. The meals are very welcome and are wolfed down, with second helpings always the order of the day. Any surplus goes to other hungry or more isolated SVP contacts. Of course, the activity is also good team-building fun and our picture shows members from St Vincent's Norden and St John's Rochdale.

Thank you Kevin

Kevin Dolan, Airedale and Skipton District Council treasurer, was presented with the long-service medal and certificate at the Spring District Council meeting held at Our Lady of Lourdes, Haworth, West Yorkshire. Kevin is known to many for his 20 years of service to the Society as well as his work with Youth SVP.



From Left: Jeremy Charnock (DC President), Kevin and Monsignor Tony Boylan (Spiritual Director).



New Faces in High Wycombe

The SVP would like to welcome a new Conference in the shape of St Augustine's, High Wycombe. The Conference has got off to a flying start with 8 members and held its first meeting on 5th April. The May Fayre, which is held on the Rye in High Wycombe, was an excellent opportunity to promote the new Conference.

Pictured: Brin Dunsire, Deacon of St Augustine's, promoting the SVP.

Manchester Central Council Festival Meeting

On a day when it felt like the long, cold winter might eventually be coming to an end, it was appropriate that Manchester Central Council held its festival meeting titled ‘Hope in the Future’.

The event was staged at Thornleigh Salesian College in Bolton, with mass celebrated by Manchester Central Council’s Spiritual Director, Canon Ryder. This venue has hosted the annual event for several years and, as usual, the meeting took place on Low Sunday, which is appropriate as the inscription on the chapel altar proclaims “My Lord and my God”, the phrase used by the apostle Thomas in the Gospel reading on that feast day.

After the Mass, which included the renewal of the Vincentian Promise, members enjoyed the customary Bolton pasties and a cup of tea, before Manchester Central Council President, Ann Towey, introduced the guest speakers. To set the scene in relation to current problems with homelessness in the Greater Manchester area, Tony Williams read an account from Francis McAndrew of St Catherine’s Conference Didsbury, of homeless men living near the Manchester City centre in appalling conditions. The men that Francis visited were living in pitch black and surrounded by debris. They were sleeping on mattresses made from loft insulation, in rotting sleeping bags and old clothes and with rats for company.

Dave Batchelor and Beth Lowe from Depaul UK, had the perfect answer in the form of ‘Nightstop Greater Manchester’. Nightstop is for young people aged from 16 to 25 who are in crisis, and provides a free and safe place to sleep in a volunteer’s home. 3,000 young people in Greater Manchester were affected by homelessness in 2016/17. So it is not surprising that in 2017 the Nightstop service was launched across the whole of Greater Manchester, to build on a service that was already being provided in Oldham.

The presenters described how young people are now the most likely group to be living in poverty. Depaul UK helps young people who are homeless, vulnerable and disadvantaged in the same way that they did when they were formed in 1989. They provide mediation and



“...the camps have also enabled people to identify issues the children may be exposed to at home, such as abuse. The camps can, therefore, be truly transformational.”

early intervention services to young people to help to prevent them from becoming homeless. They now want to grow Nightstop to make sure no young person sleeps in an unsafe place again.

The second guest speaker was Vince McAllister, National Camps Co-ordinator for the SVP, who described the work that he has been involved with for more than 30 years in running SVP camps in the neighbouring Central Council of Shrewsbury.

The children who are selected to participate in the camps come from deprived backgrounds and one of the main types of young people who use the camp are young carers – although some of them find it difficult to relax because they feel guilty about not caring for their parent. Once at the camp, all children get the opportunity to participate in activities such as abseiling, canoeing, mountain caving, as well as day trips to the coast, talent shows, sports competitions and discos, as well as a chance to participate in things they would not otherwise have the opportunity to do. Vince highlighted how the camps have also enabled people to identify issues the children may be exposed to at home, such as abuse. The camps can, therefore, be truly transformational.

With this hopeful message, Canon Ryder closed the festival meeting with a blessing, and members went off to embrace the future.

Ann Towey, Manchester Central Council President



Quiz night success!

A very successful quiz night, organised by the Knights of St Columba, managed to raise an impressive total of £500 for the Our Lady of Grace & St Teresa of Avila Conference in Chingford. In addition, the local Co-op supported the group with a Valentine's Day raffle donation of £300! The members of the Our Lady of Grace & St Teresa of Avila Conference would like to express their gratitude for these donations which will go a long way in supporting beneficiaries.

A Day of Reflection

A Day of Reflection was held in May by the Ely, Cambridgeshire, SVP Conference at St Etheldreda's Parish Church, where they were joined by members of the Sacred Heart Church St Ives, Conference. The proceedings started with Mass and after general introductions with tea and coffee in the Parish rooms, the Parish Priest, Father Tony Shryane, gave the first of two talks on the Mass and the Holy Eucharist. Two groups were formed for general discussion. After lunch in the garden the second talk and discussions took place and the afternoon concluded with the Holy Hour in the Parish Church for quiet reflection.



SVP National Pilgrimage for the Sick

Pauline McSherry, St Mary's Conference, shares with us a day of prayer and friendship at Walsingham.

Once again we the members of the Society of St Vincent de Paul joined by parishioners, 28 in number, made our way to the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham, to be united with brothers and sisters from the Diocese of East Anglia and beyond.

This means so much, most especially to the elderly, housebound and sick, and indeed to all. It is good to be united in prayer and friendship on this our annual Pilgrimage.

The sun did shine and we were given a 'warm' welcome by Monsignor Armitage. The leafy trees provided welcome shade. Mass was celebrated by the Rector,

Rev Mgr Armitage and with him to concelebrate was our good friend Father Henry MacCarthy. I think Father Henry has forgotten he is in retirement!

There was time to enjoy and share friendship and picnics. What touched me greatly was the generosity of helping hands, a true Vincentian spirit of love pervaded.

The Anointing of the Sick and Benediction brought another SVP Pilgrimage for the Sick to a close. From St Mary's Conference in King's Lynn we send heartfelt thanks to all who worked so hard to make this day such a happy occasion and prayerful Pilgrimage.

**St Vincent de Paul. Pray for us.
Blessed Frédéric Ozanam. Pray for us.**

The Camino de Santiago

The Camino de Santiago - or as it is known in English, The Way of St James - is a pilgrimage trail walked by thousands for centuries; beginning in France at St Jean Pied de Port, and finishing at the tomb of St James in Santiago de Compostela, this famous pilgrimage draws people from all over the world whether on foot, car, horse - or like Joe Gasan, by bike.

Joe is a member of SS Paul & Thomas More, Thrapston, and chose to take on the challenge to raise money for the SVP and at the same time fulfil the desire to complete the famous route. On asking Joe why he chose to cycle the route he said; "As well as the physical challenge I wanted to raise money for the SVP and I always had a desire to do the pilgrimage, but if you walk it takes about five weeks and I didn't have the time to spare. I'm quite a keen cyclist anyway so I set a challenge to cycle rather than walk it, so that's what I did!"

"I was also looking for some quiet meditative time, to reflect on one's own life. We are lucky, whilst the people we see at the SVP are often very disadvantaged. It's easy to forget that if you're healthy you are quite fortunate."

In the beginning of January this year Joe started training by cycling in the freezing frosts on Saturdays, cycling 75 kilometres in bitterly low temperatures, often finishing with numb fingers and toes. During the week Joe would train at the local gym, getting on one of the cycling machines for an hour at a time in preparation for the challenge ahead.

When asked what the most challenging part of the trip was, Joe described the steep mountainous climbs along the route. "The most difficult thing was the mountain climbs, sometimes I would be climbing up a mountain continuously for five hours, I just kept going until reaching the summit. After I reached the summit some of the descents would be so steep that I was doing 45 miles an hour on the way down. It was exhilarating."

Joe described one of his highlights arriving in one piece in Santiago without injury, and seeing the crowds of people who had finished their walks. Another particularly contemplative moment came in the form of a shrine, the Cruz de Ferro, a cross located between the towns of Foncebadón and Manjarín, where people had traditionally stopped to say prayers and add a stone to



a growing mound. "I stopped here to pray and reflect, it was a place that had a very special feel to it."

Every night Joe stopped at a different place, meeting other people from all over the world on the same journey, each with a different story to tell.

Joe finished the 800km bike ride in 8 days, raising £1,600 in total, a fantastic amount and certainly an inspiring challenge; when asked if he would do it again he replied: "I would love to do it again, I didn't want to come home, I was so elated when I had done it that I didn't want it to finish."



Revitalisation in Halifax!

SS Mary & Alban, Halifax Conference has been revitalised by welcoming several new members thanks to the efforts of Leeds Central Council recruitment team, with the ongoing help of Adrian and Mary Abel, together with Conference Officers Madeline Hickinson, Joan Smith and Liz Wilkinson. May they achieve great things!



When a crisis hits home

In a brand new feature section in Vincentian Concern, we're looking at the different ways Conferences have innovated to help others.

We'll be examining how Conferences use their members' skills, expertise, and the resources available to respond to the need in their local area. In the first of this series on Conference innovation, we look at the rural Conference of North Norfolk and their latest project to help provide emergency housing to people who suddenly find themselves without somewhere to live.

When Larry was found standing on the edge of Cromer Pier preparing to throw himself into the sea, he was taken to a local police station and an ambulance was called. When he was asked if there was anyone they could telephone to come and get him, he said no; the last place he could call home was a hundred miles away, he had been sleeping rough for months, and had lost all contact with his family. One of the paramedics suggested calling the local St Vincent de Paul Society group to ask for help. The SVP offered him a listening ear, something to eat, and found somewhere comfortable for him to stay until he could sort himself out.

Rosa and Tom were also helped by the North Norfolk SVP. They both had live-in jobs in a hotel, and when the holiday season ended, they had to give up their room. Not knowing what to do, they went to the foodbank, which called the SVP, who hired a caravan on a campsite for them until more permanent housing could be found.

The local authority provides emergency accommodation for those eligible for it, but the number of local places available is limited, and some might be miles from people's friends, place of work or children's schools.

The SVP wanted to do all it could to help but it didn't have a property of its own – until another Christian charity offered the use of a seven-bedroomed house, which quickly filled with people who had been sofa surfing, living in cars, camping in friends' gardens or fleeing domestic violence. Adopted as the Our Lady and St Joseph parish project and supported by diocesan Alive in Faith funding, it was able to employ a dedicated housing professional to manage the project, working closely with the local authority. In 2017, 11 families, 17 single adults and one couple were housed, cared for and found



permanent accommodation, but the owners needed the house back in April this year, so the SVP is looking for funds to purchase, maintain and run another building.

SVP Conference President Michael McMahon says that the project has provided much more than accommodation, and describes the house as a hub of friendship and moral and spiritual support.

"We embrace the people we help as part of our family," he says. "We are with them on their journey. We look after them in the same way any SVP Conference would look after the individuals they visit. It's the same Vincentian spirit. We offer wrap-around care that includes signposting to other agencies, helping them find the funds to move to permanent accommodation, and assisting them with furniture and carpets when they do. Michael describes the project as a 'calling'.

"God sent us people with problems and asked us to help them," he says. "And when we said 'yes', He started to provide us with what we needed to answer the call. We never thought to ourselves – 'What should we do? Oh yes, we'll start an accommodation project'. No, the situation and people were sent to us, we responded, and the call grew. Now, with prayers and goodwill, we hope to be able to continue our work to help people in need with emergency housing."

The Board of Trustees has reviewed and approved the plans.

Any members who would like to contribute to this innovative project and support their fellow members should contact Rachael Crookes by telephoning **0207 703 3030**, or emailing **rachaelc@svp.org.uk**. Alternatively, please send a cheque to St Vincent de Paul Society, Romero House, 55 Westminster Bridge Road, SE1 7JB. When donating please specify "House East Anglia".

Slavery Uncovered

Modern Day Slavery and Human Trafficking are hidden crimes against humanity happening across the UK.

The Church started addressing the issue in 2009. The Metropolitan Police & Catholic Bishops' Conference of England & Wales took the initiative, when the police needed help developing trust between themselves and sex workers who they believed had been trafficked. The workers didn't trust the police so they asked female religious volunteers to join their visits to brothels. Over the next 3 years relationships grew, more information was exchanged, more women were rescued and more traffickers were prosecuted.

After this pilot scheme was taken to Cardinal Vincent Nichols, the 2014 Santa Marta Commitment between senior police and Church leaders was signed at the Vatican. Named after the home of Pope Francis, where members stayed, the Group is now in over 30 countries. Santa Marta's strategic priorities are:

Prevention is better than cure! Educating people of the dangers of trafficking and how it happens. Offering opportunities for work and employment in the high risk areas where victims come from; providing awareness raising sessions for congregations, clergy and Church groups such as SVP, Safeguarding and Ethnic Chaplains.

Partnership - Working closely with faith groups and organisations, including the Clewer Initiative and Apostleship of the Sea; to build law enforcement relationships in the UK involving the Police, National Crime Agency, Gang Masters and Labour Abuse Authority; working with local partnerships, raising awareness in parishes and communities.

Protection helps victims recover, re-build their lives and prevent re-victimisation. One example is safe house accommodation, for example Bakhita House in London; a safe house fully funded by Westminster Diocese working closely with the Met Police, who take victims there at any time of day or night.

Prosecution of traffickers is crucial. Santa Marta help fill information gaps to support the police. Not trying to turn us into police informants, but we are asked to be 'eyes and ears', reporting concerns by ringing 999. If they suspect premises are using slaves or exploiting workers they can phone UK Modern Slavery Helpline on **0800 0121 700** anonymously.



Some examples of signs to look out for

Victims of modern day trafficking are often "employed" in nail bars, car washes, shops and hotels. If you are concerned that trafficking or modern day slavery might be happening in establishments in your area here are some signs to look out for:

- **Do staff speak very little English or none?**
- **Are staff unusually quiet or untidy?**
- **Is someone else talking and taking payment?**
- **Is there a lack of professional qualifications on display?**
- **Are employees dressed appropriately?**
- **Does the space seem overstaffed?**
- **Do staff seem uneasy and under pressure?**
- **Is the store-front untidy and uncared for?**
- **Is there a lack of friendliness between management and staff?**
- **Any signs of staff living there?**
- **Are workers being escorted?**
- **Do staff appear unable to speak freely?**
- **Do employees seem fearful or controlled?**

For further information please download our new Fact Sheet on Modern Day Slavery and Trafficking and visit the Santa Marta website, which has resources such as prayer cards, signs to identify slavery, bidding prayers and posters. **Do not try to intervene on your own as it might make the victim's situation worse. The criminals will move the victim on before the authorities arrive.**

For further advice please visit the following resources: www.santamartagroup.com, www.antislavery.org, www.kent.police.uk/advice/human-trafficking-and-modern-day-slavery

The SVP Social Justice Committee would like to hear from Conferences or Councils who have any experiences of this or other Social Justice Issues they would like to share. Please contact raymond@svp.org.uk

Raymond Daley, Chair of SVP Social Justice Committee



Focus on: Community Support Projects

CSP Organisation



People

200 staff & approximately
250 volunteers



Money

Retail turnover: £2.75m
Support Centre expenditure: £2.5m

- this includes Approved Premises (APs) and other CSPs outside the framework, principally St Vincent's Support Centre, Leeds (SVSC) and Sheffield Furniture Store (SFS)

Projects

- 40** **Community Shops** (across England & Wales)
- 4** **Furniture Projects** (Leeds, Bradford and Sheffield)
- 2** **Approved Premises (APs)** (Newcastle)
- 3** **Hostels offering Supported Accommodation** (Len Woodley, Newcastle)
- 4** **Support Centres** Tower House (Brighton), SVSC (Leeds), Blackfriars (Newcastle) and Advice contract & immigration services (Allenby House, Bradford)

This edition of the VC features an overview of our Community Support Projects (CSPs) – where they are and what they do, with a closer look at our Support Centres.

How are we managed and organised?

The CSP's are headed up by Kate Nightingale (Deputy CEO) and managed and run by paid staff, supported by dedicated SVP members and volunteers.

Ultimate responsibility for the CSP rests with the SVP Trustees who delegate the oversight to the CSP Committee, of which Richard Palmi is the Chair. SVP members are engaged in many projects through Local Oversight Groups and Management Committees and play a key part in ensuring that local needs are identified and that the Vincentian ethos is maintained in the work that we do. Local Conference members also get involved by promoting referrals between Conferences and projects and vice versa.

CSP Strategy

The CSP strategy has been agreed by the Board and was circulated as part of the wider SVP strategy in the Spring edition of the VC. The key strategic priorities are as follows:

- **Secure Greater Financial Stability** by generating income in our shops.
- **Extend Our Reach** by growing new Support Centres in new locations by at least 1 by 2021.
- **Embrace Innovation** by developing new Advice and Support services within our existing Support Centres and by new and improved client services for Supported Accommodation.
- **Raise Our Profile** by increasing internal and external articles and press releases.
- **Build a "Mission Ready" Infrastructure** to make sure we are compliant and fit for purpose.

A closer look at SVP Support Centres

‘Growing people, changing lives’ is the primary mission of all the SVP Support Centres. We do this in a variety of ways, but the central tenet is practical support to people in need who often have nowhere else to turn.

The heart of the Support Centre ethos is that everyone is valuable. Whether a volunteer, staff member or beneficiary, everyone is treated with dignity and respect. All Support Centre staff and volunteers remember in their daily work to show that “everyone is welcome”. This means that no matter how vulnerable and powerless someone might be, no matter what their past, everyone is received with care and treated with the same dignity and respect. In fact, Kate Nightingale says that at our projects “you shouldn’t be able to tell who’s who”. This is perhaps how so many former beneficiaries become volunteers, or even staff members, themselves. It’s a real mix of roles and relationships, no one is ‘fixed’ or ‘pinned’ into their current situation and the Support Centres are a prime example of this.

In Leeds, Brighton and Newcastle head, heart and hunger are all fed through cafés where people can come together to share good food and conversation. These spaces of meeting and eating are the hub of the Centres, a place where stories are told and ideas exchanged, in a friendly, welcoming recreational setting. Classes and activities take place around these hubs, so that the Centres are very much a place of community and activity.

CHAS@St Vincent’s



CHAS@St Vincent’s at Allenby House, Bradford offers community based advice, which is contracted by Bradford Council. This covers a range of advice including welfare benefits, debt advice, housing advice, employment and immigration. Allenby House works

“ The heart of the Support Centre ethos is that everyone is valuable. Whether a volunteer, staff member or beneficiary, everyone is treated with dignity and respect.”

with members to provide fuel top-ups – especially during winter months – food parcels and household items through an assisted purchase scheme run by the local authority.

The Community Learning and Development team focus on support for lifelong learning using an approach tailored to each person and their individual needs. Classes focus on basic skills for IT and literacy, although there are a range of other groups and projects to take part in such as health and wellbeing, knitting and creative art classes.

For people for whom English is a second language, including asylum seekers and refugees, there are English language classes, with additional support helping people connect with the community. Migrants and refugees studying English at CHAS@St Vincent’s often receive help with wider needs such as finding suitable housing or school places for their children. Likewise there is employment support and related activities such as computer classes which are open to the whole community. It’s all about helping people empower themselves out of poverty and helping people become active and included in society.

Members of the Society also get involved at CHAS@St Vincent’s when it comes to helping those in need. Members identify where help is needed within the local community, and work with the Support Centre to address a variety of issues. In addition members also help promote volunteering at CHAS@St Vincent’s and have come to help during the refugee crisis and in response to the call for action in this area.

Staff at Allenby House regularly collaborate with local people in need to develop and sustain projects that people can run themselves to help others. Maria recently completed a work placement at CHAS@St Vincent’s Community Learning and Development department. While Maria was there, she was tasked with running a women’s group to help with wellbeing. With the encouragement of staff, Maria went on to start the group who now meet on a regular basis, carrying out



Focus on: Community Support Projects

activities that assist with positive mental and physical health. Recently the women made paper flower bouquets. In Maria's own words she says:

"The purpose is to promote women's well-being, to gain new friends and develop practical skills that can be applied to their day to day lives. It can also help improve their English through interaction and following instructions... Thank you for the opportunity to have a wonderful work placement in such a diverse community."

Blackfriars



The heart of Blackfriars Centre in Newcastle is its café. On a Monday, Wednesday and Thursday, it runs on a 'pay as you please' basis, where anyone from any walk of life can come in and have a meal and choose whether to give a donation for it or not. Thus, no one is excluded from the service.

The highlight of the week is a Tuesday, when the doors are opened to around 100 people to provide a free, healthy, freshly prepared three course meal, plus the chance to take away a goody bag at the end of the meal. Blackfriars are able to do this because of food donations from the local supermarkets through a deal called FareShare.

People come because they are lonely, hungry, homeless, vulnerable and for many other reasons. There are flowers and free newspapers on the tables and a table service is offered so that clients feel tended to and special.

Blackfriars' aspiration is to work with other organisations in the city to provide holistic support to those who use the services. The Support Centre already receives support from Marks & Spencer, Starbucks, EE, Danone

“ It was nice to sit down and be served and eat my meal with a proper knife and fork and drink my tea out of a proper cup rather than plastic. Little things make a difference.”

and other local businesses. Volunteers from local Job Centres take part in the event and have been able to signpost diners to benefits they didn't know they were entitled to. Local dentists have donated free supplies of toothpaste and toothbrushes and are coming in again shortly to talk about oral hygiene with service users. There are sleeping bags and warm clothes for those who need them and emergency food parcels can be provided when required.

Blackfriars is supported by around 40 volunteers, around half of whom are SVP members from the local Conferences. When they get a chance, they sit down and chat to people and make them feel welcome and extend to them the Vincentian values.

Due to the number of people Blackfriars are feeding, it has highlighted the shortcomings of the current kitchen and the centre is now looking for funding to refurbish it to professional catering standards so that it can feed people even more effectively.

St Vincent's Support Centre, Leeds



St Vincent's Support Centre, Leeds, offers a wider range of support and activities to help and empower local people. This includes a large education programme with 15 English classes being delivered a week alongside counselling, debt advice, migration support and a large and inclusive volunteering programme.

In addition to this, emergency food parcels are available for those in need and the community café, which is the heart of the centre, offers a “pay it forward” scheme to provide free hot meals to those without.

People often comment on the warm welcome received by all at the centre, and this was just the case when the SVP’s International President, Renato Lima de Oliveira, visited in June 2018.

In addition to the more formal services, a number of group activities are available for everyone to join. This includes an art and conversation group, a friendship group and a good mood group. The centre is dementia friendly and accessible to all which means that everyone can come and join in – there is even table tennis on a Friday afternoon. In December 2017, the centre was awarded the Jo Cox Compassionate Cities award for the work done to tackle social isolation.

St Vincent’s Support Centre is well known in Leeds as a place where everyone can join in. Corporate Supporters such as Marks & Spencer and Equifax are often found helping out as are local Conference members and Mini Vinnies. People find the welcome wonderful and often say the place feels homely and somewhere where everyone has a value, whether as a volunteer, a student or just a customer popping in for a coffee.

Recently, Abbie (not real name), a corporate volunteer said:

“ I met some amazing people. I honestly had the most amazing time with you, the staff, the visitors and the other volunteers I met – I miss you all. When the opportunity comes back I’d love to volunteer again, so you may see me again, hopefully soon. Thank you so much Sheena and to everyone at St Vincent’s for making my 5 weeks an amazing experience that I’ll never ever forget!”

Tower House



Tower House is the SVP’s newest Support Centre, and is based in a beautiful Victorian house that has been converted into a specialist Centre for older people in Brighton.

Welcoming older people and their carers, Tower House volunteers drive a St Vincent’s mini bus to collect people from their homes and bring them to the Centre. They can have a hot meal, a cup of tea and cake in the café, a chat with their friends. They can then participate in a music class, have a go at some table tennis or a light exercise class.

For many people who attend the centre, their visit is the highlight of their week. Otherwise isolated, frail and potentially lonely, they are often unable to access other services in the local community and being picked up and taken to Tower House means they can have some much needed social contact. It is an invaluable experience for people who are all too often forgotten by society.

The house is a warm and welcoming environment with songs, bunting and bright light flooding in from the huge windows. There is a large living room and conservatory with comfortable arm chairs and sofas where everyone can gather after lunch.

As with all the SVP Support Centres the positive vibe is palpable and you can’t help but leave with a smile.

All of our Support Centres aim to be sustainable and rely on donations, grants and contracts as well as our brilliant SVP members and other volunteers to keep the doors open and the services running. If you want to know more about any of our Support Centres or can offer us help please contact Kate Nightingale on katen@svp.org.uk and she will tell you more and put you in touch with your local Support Centre Manager.



A School of Sanctuary

As of June 2017 Notre Dame High School, Norwich, was awarded the title of a School of Sanctuary, a school that commits itself to helping people who could be living in danger in their own country, living in difficult circumstances at home, or simply offering sanctuary to people looking for a safe space.

Joe Oram, a year 12 student at Notre Dame High School shares some of the work that the students undertake in light of their mission and faith, and shows how these committed students are exemplifying how we could all offer a little sanctuary to others.

A refugee is classified as 'a person who has been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution or natural disaster'. These are often very desperate people who are seeking sanctuary in other countries, particularly those within the EU. The UK has already accepted thousands of refugees however, so much more can be done by all of us.

As a Catholic school, Notre Dame High School has a strong emphasis on helping others, not only through contributing our money but also our time and prayers to important causes and charities. In responding to the crises of refugees, one of our current primary concerns is praying for and aiding those who have fled for their lives; forced to seek sanctuary in foreign countries, where they barely know the language and where it is difficult to restart their lives after surviving so much trauma and fear.

As a school, we spread awareness of the plight of refugees and all people displaced, and invite empathy and action. This may be through specific lessons in RE, school assemblies, form time discussion and prayer, charity work and various activities during Refugee Week.

“ To serve those who are poor is to go to God, and you should see God in them.”

St Vincent de Paul

The SVP Youth Conference also contributes through prayer and charity work, in the spirit of its founder Blessed Frédéric Ozanam. At Christmas we filled rucksacks with both essentials for living and fun items such as colouring books and pens, toys, games and sweets to bring joy and normality to families, which were then distributed to asylum seekers, local to Norwich. We also brought the whole school community together in focusing our end of term prayers for all those who find themselves displaced and afraid. During Lent we wrote prayers for refugees and asylum seekers and shared with the wider school community, reminding us that we all have an ability to break down prejudice and discrimination and bring friendship and cohesion to society.

Notre Dame High School tries its best to help those less fortunate and more vulnerable and aims to have a welcoming atmosphere as both a Catholic community and also a 'School of Sanctuary'. We emphasise the importance of Christ's teaching to serve others and love our neighbour and take action to embed inclusion within our school, creating an atmosphere of acceptance and greeting.

Joe Oram, Student of Notre Dame High School and SVP member

A Prayer from Notre Dame

**Almighty and compassionate God,
Whose only son suffered on the cross and died for our sins; allow us to feel the same love you felt for your son, our Saviour, to those going through pain and strife today.**

Allow those who have been displaced, separated from their loved ones or have been caught in crisis to find solace in you.

Allow us to use your Holy Spirit and guidance to show your kindness to every person and especially those in need. Amen.

Gabriel Astorga, Year 13

Junior Members visit the Charles Thompson Mission

At St. Anselm's College, we have a long tradition of SVP activity

We host the oldest school SVP Conference in England and Wales, founded in 1947. As an RE teacher I took the opportunity to set up a junior SVP group to work alongside and complement the senior group. Our numbers are growing and the commitment from the pupils is fantastic.

It was difficult to decide what our first mission should be, the pupils were very enthusiastic about helping but were overwhelmed and struggled to understand how exactly they could make a difference. We decided that the most pressing need in our local community is homelessness and so we have worked to help the homeless in different ways.

During Lent we collected food items, made hampers and donated them to the Charles Thompson Mission which provides a range of services to the homeless and people in need in Birkenhead. I was very proud of how hard the pupils worked and their success.



Taking them to visit the Mission was an eye-opening experience for us all. It really put into perspective how many people are in desperate need of help. The Mission was very grateful for all our efforts and we are looking forward to becoming more involved with them and visiting again in the near future. The members have the 'bug' of helping now. Again, they found it difficult to decide one way to help; they want to save the world over night! Our next project is to help the homeless further by providing basic necessities such as sleeping bags, hats, gloves etc. I am looking forward to this venture and to seeing the pupils shine.

Miss Brogan McKenzie-Burke, St Anselm's College

Grandparents and Parishioners enjoy Crackley Cream Tea



Despite somewhat miserable weather outside, the School Hall at Crackley Hall School reverberated with friendly chatter and the clink of china tea cups as local parishioners and grandparents enjoyed an afternoon of

entertainment and a very special Crackley Hall cream tea. Organised by Crackley Hall's Minnie Vinnies, the junior arm of the St Vincent de Paul Society, plates piled high with scones, strawberries, jam and cream were served to a hall full of guests.

The special tea took place on the afternoon of Tuesday 24th April and, along with their refreshments, parishioners and grandparents had a full programme of entertainment to enjoy. This year the entertainment included the talented Choral Speaking Group as well as the Orchestra, Chamber Choir and Choral Group; they all performed their pieces with confidence and panache much to the delight of the gathered guests. Then there were a number of individual solo performances with Chenchen Pan playing a simply stunning piano solo. The afternoon's entertainment culminated with 90 children on stage and a stirring rendition of 'The Rhythm of Life'. After the entertainment came the cream tea and our Mini Vinnies carefully carried out laden trays, cake stands and pots of tea for the guests to enjoy. They approached the tables a little shyly at first, but were soon chatting happily with their guests.

Mr Rob Duigan, the Headmaster, popped in to welcome everyone to the school and to thank Mrs Dolores Simmonds for helping the Mini Vinnies organise the community event. Mrs Simmonds, Mini Vinnies Co-ordinator, said, "the underlying purpose of the St Vincent de Paul ethos is to make a difference to people's lives. Crackley Hall and our Mini Vinnies have laid on a wonderful afternoon for our local community which was clearly thoroughly enjoyed by all."



Launch of B-AttitudeLife

On 4th June at the SVP National Office at Romero House, members, staff, volunteers and contributors came together to celebrate the launch of B-AttitudeLife, the new Young Vincentians web-application that combines the teachings of the Catholic faith, transferable life skills training and practical charitable works in an interactive, media-driven resource.

The application is easy to use and provokes new ways of thinking about faith and approaching charitable works for young people. Presentations were given by contributors and designers including Ana Ferrer-Bonsoms, Emily Moore and Teresa Kehoe, with an introduction by Claz Gomez, National Youth Coordinator. An interactive display was created for attendees to use the app live with guidance from staff.



Left to right: Young Vincentian Beth Sorensen with, Joanna Waller (YVDO & member of the Youth Committee) and Michael Willcock (Chair of Youth Committee)

If you would like to know more about the application please get in touch with the Young Vincentians team at youngvincentians@svp.org.uk

Catholic Walking Tour of London

The SVP took to the streets of London for a Walking Tour hosted by well-known Catholic Historian Joanna Bogel, also a presenter on EWTN Global Catholic Television Network and a specialist on the Catholic history of London.

More affectionately known by the group as Aunty Joanna, Joanna took the group under her wing and led these keen learners on an insightful and informative tour of the city, reminding us just how much of London's development is influenced by the Catholic Church.

The tour began at Westminster Cathedral and continued around some of London's finest features including Westminster Abbey, Thorney Island, the Houses of Parliament and finished with a long march to the Tower of London, the concluding attraction.

The group were joined by the Young Vincentian Coordinators of Grenada, Kymmala Francis, and Urbanus Muthai from Kenya who joined before heading to Salamanca for the Youth International Meeting.



Claz Gomez, organiser of the event and Young Vincentians Coordinator in England and Wales, thought it would be an interesting event for our international visitors, to see how much Catholicism influenced the development of London. The day was a success with visitors from all over London and beyond coming together with members of the SVP England and Wales and local parishioners.

Famvin Homeless Alliance:

A Vincentian Family Global Initiative on Homelessness



Vincentians today face the same challenge Frédéric found himself confronted with: a world where countless people suffer from homelessness, displacement and poverty. Frédéric stepped forward and was determined to help the poor with food, housing and clothing – always asking what else he could do to improve their lives.

As a Family we continued to ask that same question and in 2017, in celebration of the 400th anniversary of the Charism, we responded with the launch of a global initiative: the Famvin Homeless Alliance. It is a project with a strong focus on welcoming the stranger amongst us – helping the millions of refugees and those that live on the streets and in slums by:

- **Building more housing**
- **Improving services in all countries in which the Vincentian Family works**
- **Connecting Vincentians working across the broad spectrum of homelessness and share best practice and effective models**
- **Supporting and developing existing and emerging leaders through training programmes**
- **Lobbying for structural and systemic change at a national, regional and global level**

Pope Francis reminds us that *“the Church seeks to embrace us all, and says that it is a right to have a roof over your head”* – a thought that sums up the vision of the Famvin Homeless Alliance: a world in which everyone has a place to call home and a stake in their community.

We are ambitious, but we believe that the collaborative efforts of the entire Vincentian Family will help us to show the world what we can do. We want to shape that journey together with the entire Vincentian Family and with those that we are here to serve – building a culture of encounter and inclusion. The Famvin Homeless Alliance is a call to all Vincentians to come together to make a difference; it is a call to bring about change in a society which, in the words of Pope Francis, suffers from a *“globalisation of indifference”*.

St. Vincent lived collaboration; he *“brought together as many people as he could, rich and poor, humble and powerful, and used every means to inspire in them a sensitivity to the poor, who are the privileged image of Christ.”* (Constitutions of the Congregation of the Mission, Introduction, p.19)



“ Are we then to remain passive in the middle of a world which is suffering and groaning?”

Frédéric Ozanam

Inspired by his life and work, we were led to the very beginnings of his efforts and to an initiative that changed the lives of thousands of foundlings: The 13 Houses. He built these small houses, rented them to the Ladies of Charity to care for foundlings and used the rent to support the missions in Sedan – an idea that was as simple as it was brilliant.

This initiative was as relevant then as it is today which is why we invite all members of the Vincentian Family to sign up to our 13 Houses Campaign – a Campaign due to be launched this year, encouraging members to build their very own 13 Houses!

These could be actual houses that become a home to those in most desperate need. Or they could be understood as a metaphor for the very things they initially stood for: safety, community, warmth and hope. This is likely to look very different in each country, depending on needs and resources. It could take shape in the form of a community hosting service for the elderly homeless, or the distribution of family tents to offer humanitarian aid, or by simply welcoming the poorest around a table, offering solidarity and care.

Become part of this movement for change. Join the Famvin Homeless Alliance at www.vfhomelessalliance.org

Denise El-Khoury, Communications Manager, Famvin Homeless Alliance



An International Visit



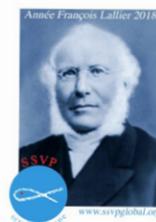
It was on the feast of Ss Peter and Paul that Renato Lima de Oliveira, International President General of the SVP, visited Leeds to observe and participate in the work of the SVP.

Renato, who hails from Brazil, was impressed by all he saw. The day before he had had a tour of the SVP projects in Newcastle including the Approved Premises hostel for ex-offenders run in partnership with the Ministry of Justice, and the SVP Blackfriars Centre which runs projects such as their Vinnies free drop-in lunch service for local community members, and a hostel for homeless men. Renato also spent time with members from St Robert's Conference, Fenham, visiting an older people's residential home.

The following day, Renato visited the St Vincent's Support Centre in Leeds where he learnt about the many different activities that take place to engage the local community. Refugees are taught English Language, a community shop sells affordable second hand goods to locals visiting the centre, and a food bank distributes food via local SVP parish Conferences in the area. Renato spoke to beneficiaries, volunteers, trustees and staff, as well as tasting some specially made shortbread biscuits in the St Vincent's café.

At St Vincent's Renato, who has been a Vincentian since the age of 15, also witnessed a Conference meeting where he was particularly interested to see the similarities between England and Latin America where food poverty is common. Following the Conference meeting Renato travelled together with SVP National President Helen O'Shea, and Central Council President Marie Atherton to visit Bishop Marcus Stock at his home near Headingley.

Bishop Marcus greeted the small cohort with warmth and kindness, and together they discussed the special need for leadership amongst young people in the Church. The Bishop, an education specialist, was interested to discuss the new SVP online website for teenagers aged 14-18 named B-Attitudelife. The Bishop welcomed this interactive resource, which encourages teenagers to develop their faith. He said that the Church is in need of young leaders, and the SVP's Young Vincentian programme would help develop the skills and spiritual awareness needed to lead in a Church setting.



*International Confederation
Society of Saint Vincent de Paul
Council General International
16th President General*



Letter 34/2018
Paris, 17 July 2018.

To sister
Helen O'Shea
SSVP National Council

Subject: Thanks.

*Dear president and dear National Board members,
Dear presidents of Conferences, Councils and special works,*

1. In this letter, I'd like to send my profound gratitude to the Vincentians of **England and Wales** for my excellent visit to this European country between **27-30 June 2018**. The generous and loving manner in which I was received left me so contented that I felt as if I were at home. I would also like to express sincere thanks, on behalf of the Council General International (CGI), for the contribution towards some expenses of my trip, made by the National Council and other Councils.

2. I appreciated, with great affection, the comprehensive institutional programme prepared for me in all places visited (Newcastle and Leeds), including visits to Conferences, Councils and Vincentian works; meetings with the youth and with the Vincentian Family; contacts with political, social and ecclesial leaderships; and, above all, meeting with people in need. Be aware that I learned a lot during the days I was in your country. It was a memorable experience!

3. May you stay firm in the Vincentian way, seeking for personal sanctification by practicing charity with those who suffer. Maintain a cordial atmosphere in the Conferences. Do not ever fade away, because the Poor people we are assisting depend on us. Continue to use the creativity that God has given us to find alternative ways of doing more for our needy brethren, even with few resources available.

4. I thank everyone for their support in the dissemination of the main international projects and programs being carried out by the Council General (www.ssvpglobal.org) so that the Vincentians can be well informed about the news and initiatives in the spotlight. I ask your prayers for the success of this mandate, for the most needy and for the glory of the Lord Jesus.

*With renewed thanks for the warm welcome and generous hospitality
I received during my days in England.*

Brother Renato Lima de Oliveira
16th President General

Following the meeting Renato spent the afternoon at Hinsley Hall, where he had the great pleasure of witnessing a Board meeting and National Council meeting. He very much enjoyed meeting members from the Yorkshire locality and learning about their work.

The work of the SVP in Brazil and England varies somewhat because of different forms of poverty. Renato said that in England there is the poverty of loneliness and lacking in spirituality, whereas in Brazil there is more material poverty. However, he spoke of how internationally there is little difference between countries. "Members around the world work in harmony. I see this when I visit the countries. They do the same job – do the charity, seek for our holiness to work with the Church to build a better world. We are here to serve and to follow the steps of our founders."

The International President spoke of how there is a global challenge in the SVP to recruit members to officers' posts such as President, Secretary and Treasurer. He said that these roles are very much a 'vocation within a vocation' and require special skills. "People are reluctant to take on the responsibility that comes with being a President, but really they need to ask themselves, what is God calling me to do? If someone has been a leader in their work place, it is very likely that they will be well equipped to take on a role as an officer in their Conference too. But it takes a great deal of passion, because without passion you cannot fulfil these roles well".

Helping you to Help Others

A small Conference providing assistance and support to local beneficiaries in a deprived neighbourhood found themselves facing a very difficult dilemma.

For many years, the Conference has been providing financial support and material assistance to people in need in their local community. Over that time, the Conference has assisted a variety of beneficiaries, including more recently people suffering from the effects of substance abuse. Not shying away from the challenges of helping people from all walks of life, Conference members continued to provide all the help and support within their means.

Recently, a new member, Charles pointed out his home when grocery shopping with a beneficiary, Andrea. A few days later, responding to loud and persistent banging at his door, he opened it to find Andrea asking Charles to let her in as she was being pursued and threatened by her dealer. Charles let Andrea come into the house where she stayed for the day until Charles drove her home. While Charles had Andrea's best interests at heart, by failing to call the police he potentially put both himself and Andrea at risk.

Visiting people suffering from addiction can be emotionally challenging and our desire to help can in some cases undermine our own assessment of the situation. In hoping to provide comfort and compassion we can often find ourselves ignoring the risks. While good intentions come with being a good Vincentian, it is important to stay safe and follow the advice in the Conference Safeguarding Manual provided by the Society, particularly when visiting with beneficiaries suffering from addiction.

As with any visit there are simple procedures that we should follow:

- **Undertake a Risk Assessment**

Before visiting a beneficiary, obtain as much information as possible and determine any actual and potential risks to which you might be exposed. Visiting might take place in an isolated area where it is difficult to call for assistance; you might be visiting someone with tendencies towards acts of hostility. Record this information in the Conference minutes and include all the relevant information in a risk assessment prior to visiting.



- **Always visit in pairs**

It is advised that visiting takes place in pairs and that a variety of people visit the same beneficiary, this reduces the risk of a beneficiary become dependent on one member, but rather they are getting the benefit of meeting new faces.

- **Recognise your limitations**

Do you find a beneficiary a particular challenge but feel obliged to help? Make sure that before going into any visit that you are comfortable in the situation and feel like you have the appropriate knowledge, skills and training to manage the outcome.

- **Seek help and contact the Safeguarding team**

If you are ever unsure of what to do in a particular situation or you have visited someone and feel that it could have gone better, perhaps you feel that there is more to be done but you do not have the appropriate training, always contact the Safeguarding Manager at National Office who will be able to advise and support both you and your Conference.

Catherine Kerr, Safeguarding Manager



Twinnage

Current projects in Romania

An update from Mary Abel

During my visits to Romania over the years I have met many SVP members who support individuals and families with basic needs for food, clothing, medicines and fuel for heating. They also help with house repairs after floods or fire.

In the last few years several England and Wales Conferences have sponsored projects to make a more lasting difference, improving families' living conditions or setting up small businesses, enabling them to be self-sufficient. Examples include home refurbishment to provide a safer home, and the purchase of livestock so families can support themselves and others.

When I was in Romania last year I met a family in Iasi who were living in very difficult conditions. Access to the house was via a rough path and a wooden ladder up to the front door. The house had just two rooms: a kitchen, where the father slept and a bedroom where Mum, Maria, slept with their four young children. The children struggled with their homework as they depended on candles for light. Dad was only able to get casual work, so there was very little income. The SVP Conference of St Teresa, Iasi helped with food and firewood for the wood-burning stove which they used for cooking and heat. Fortunately, we were able to organise a refurbishment project funded through a legacy from a Conference in Cheadle. Within six months the house was transformed.



The Mercher family prepare space in their garden for a cow which will provide milk and cheese for them and their wider family. They can now buy uniform and stationery so that young Ionut can attend school.



Lenuta Burlacu with three of her four children. Thanks to their increased income from the pig-rearing business her daughter, Denisa, has been able to go to university.

Conference members helped with the restoration, building a safer path and steps up to a new front door, laying a new floor inside, providing a cooker and arranging for electricity to be installed. The children can now do their homework in safety and were delighted when the Conference gave them lots of new stationery items. Maria is taking a dressmaking course and hopes her new skills will enable her to help with the family finances.

Another Conference in Iasi, St Anton, sponsored a project to buy bees and equipment to enable the Hogeia family to support themselves and their wider family through the sale of honey and wax products. Meanwhile in Baltati the Mercher family can sell cheese made from the milk from a cow purchased by the Conference with funds from the Cheadle legacy. Young Ionut can now attend school as there is money to pay for the required uniform and stationery.

In Adjudeni, Lenuta Burlacu struggled to provide for her four children after they had to move away from her violent husband. They depended on a small income from the proceeds of selling milk from a cow. When I visited them last year Lenuta was building a pig-sty in the hope of being able to rear pigs. A project, funded by the Cheadle legacy, enabled the Conference to buy two pregnant sows. Piglets will be offered to families recommended by the SVP, and meat will be given to families in need.

During my visits to Romania I have encouraged our twinned Conferences to come up with projects which could vastly improve the lives of the people they support. £1000 from an England and Wales Conference can really help to change people's lives. Many Romanian Conferences have two England and Wales twins, so a project could be funded by £500 from each Conference. Helping people to become self-supporting is one of the principle aims of the Society and for many England and Wales Conferences, this is easily in their power.

Mary Abel, Our Lady of Lourdes, Huddersfield

The SVP in Guyana

An update from John Wild

The name Guyana comes from the Amerindian language and means land of many waters. Spanned by many rivers, the country lies on the north-east shoulder of South America, bordered by Venezuela, Brazil and Surinam.

It is the only country on the continent using English as its official language and has the same land area as England and Scotland combined. 80% is covered by forests with most of the population of 750,000 living on the coastal plain between Georgetown, the capital, and New Amsterdam to the south.

The St Vincent de Paul Society in Guyana is known as the SSVP. There are a total of 20 Conferences in seven of the 10 administrative regions that make up the country. 16 of these Conferences are twinned with SVP groups in England and Wales.

SSVP Conferences visit and support families in need with food hampers while also providing medical assistance where needed and distributing vital items such as bedding and school uniforms. The Superior Council runs a medical outreach programme supplying Conferences with off the shelf medicines for people who can't afford to pay or are unable to source them locally. The Society also supports several care homes for the elderly.

Following a visit to Guyana in January 2015, seven small projects were set up using part of a South American legacy fund with a total cost of £38,000. The projects comprised six income-generating projects and maintenance of a care home for sick and elderly men



Recently established sewing project, Ascension Conference, New Amsterdam, Region 6



SSVP shop, St. Joseph Husband of Mary Conference, Mabaruma, Region 1



in Georgetown: the latter project cost about £19,000 with the other small income-generating projects typically costing about £3,000 each. SVP Twinnage Committee member John Wild reports that “the refurbishment of the men’s home has provided a safer and cosier environment for both staff and residents, all of whom are very appreciative of the work carried out.”

A further trip took place in October 2017 during which some 12 Conferences were visited plus five of the projects, which were all operational.

During the visit, proposals were developed for a further six small income-generating projects costing about £10,500 and again funded through the legacy. The new projects included completion work for a “snackette”, a small shop selling mainly food and drink items to generate funds to support the men’s home, two SSVP shops selling general goods / produce from a chicken rearing project, a shop selling crafts and religious items, a shop extension to provide kitchen / storage facilities and two sewing projects producing mosquito nets, bed linen and school uniforms. The basic idea for all the projects, which are mainly run by Conference members, is to raise funds to support the work with the poor and people in need in the community. A recent progress report indicated that five of the new projects are already operational.

Following elections in May, Winston Playter is stepping down as President of the Superior Council in Guyana after 12 years in office and the new incoming President will be Ms. Pinkey Richards. Winston will remain on the Superior Council as Projects Officer supported by Devi Diaram, President of the Guardian Angels Conference in Hopetown.

John Wild, National Twinnage Committee member



Members' Info

Awareness Month 2018

Throughout September the SVP will be taking part in Awareness Month, a time in which volunteers, members and staff contribute to raising awareness of the Society and the work that we do both nationally and within the local community.

By contributing to raising awareness during a particular month of the year with extra vigour we can create ripples only achieved by working together as a whole. Awareness month is an opportunity to talk about the Society with your fellow parishioners, to share stories about your achievements in your local area and, through this conversation, inspire others to contribute to our mission.

If you are a Conference, materials will be with you shortly including posters, a report on our work and inserts for your parish newsletter. If you have not yet received these materials please get in touch with us at the National Office at comms@svp.org.uk.



Member Training

On July 11th the National Office hosted a pilot member training session open to members of Westminster, Southwark and Brentwood Central Council.

The training took place over a full day and covered topics such as Conference finance, administration, compliance issues and safeguarding, designed to assist members in tackling some of the administrative challenges that come with organising your local Conference. An introduction was given by Ann Harris, representing the board of trustees, and presentations were led by various staff including Catherine Kerr on safeguarding, Teddy Curran on Conference administration, Matthew Stockton on compliance issues and Rob White on finance.

Feedback included: "Your dynamic informative interactive presentation confounded my negativity and shot me out of my seat! It was one of the best presentations I have ever experienced! You are truly inspirational and it was a privilege to be there - the time passed all too quickly."



Following feedback from the attendees the National Office will be rolling out the training across all Central Councils later this year. This is also a chance to meet with other Conferences in your local area, as well as National Office staff, over a cup of tea in the morning or lunch in the afternoon. More information on the next sessions and how to sign up will follow shortly.

An Introduction

Eileen Moore

Membership Finance Manager

Eileen Moore is Membership Finance Manager, supporting Conference Treasurers with a team of two based in Bradford.

Eileen says: "In a nutshell the purpose of our team is to support and provide guidance to all our volunteer Treasurers – whether at Conference, District or Central Council level. We process all the quarterly returns, speak to Treasurers if we can't resolve any issues and provide them with guidance around their returns and how to improve their reporting."

Eileen and her team also work with Conference Presidents who need extra assistance with returns, maybe in the absence of a treasurer or where their Treasurer lacks confidence.

Eileen says that while part of her job is to make sure Conference finance runs smoothly, it is also so important to help Treasurers "know their value, how much they are appreciated and that they are important. We can't do our job without the Treasurers. They are vital."

While Eileen is aware that a Conference Treasurer's work can be onerous, she wants to encourage them as much as possible. "It's nothing to be frightened of. We are here to help and any time Treasurers have any questions, or are not sure what to do, we are at the end of the phone



Eileen (centre) and Membership Finance Officers Qubra Bibi (left) and Analiese Rebanks (right)

or an email and are more than happy to help. That's our job", Eileen says.

To members who are not Treasurers, Eileen invites you to support your Treasurer. "If you see someone struggling, let us know. Contact us in Bradford. We're a friendly lot and we want to help. We want you to feel supported."

Originally from the USA, Eileen is a qualified Chartered Accountant with more than 35 years' experience of working in finance for a wide range of organisations. When asked what she enjoys most about her job at the SVP Eileen responds: "It's definitely about interacting with members. Sometimes there is huge relief in their voices when they speak to someone who is willing to help and you can often hear the smile along with the thank you – that's the best part."

To contact Eileen and her team in Bradford who work with Conference accounts, telephone **01274 513 045**.

Banking with NatWest: An Update

The Society is in the process of changing its banking provider to NatWest from the Co-op. For various reasons the transfer of the initial batch of accounts has taken longer than we anticipated, but this is now almost complete.

We have now written to the next 345 Conferences and Councils due to be transferred and expect to be able to write to all remaining Conferences and Councils by the end of September at the very latest.

NatWest will provide the Society with several improvements over our existing banking arrangements. Principally these will be:

- Improved service times for change of signatory information going forward
- Improved online banking facilities which will be available to Conferences, Councils and Projects
- A wider local branch network, which we hope will reduce travel times and admin burden for members

If you have any queries about the banking transfer, or have urgent need to change signatories and we have not yet written to you, please contact the Bradford Finance Team on **01274 513045** (option 1 for Membership Finance).

Rob White, Head of Finance



Fundraising

New Gift Aid Envelope

The Society's Gift Aid envelope has been redesigned and updated

The slightly larger and more modern format features an image from our website and a tear-off slip which can be completed and inserted inside the envelope, so that our donors' data is handled even more securely.

It also includes the Fundraising Regulator's logo, which must appear on all the Society's fundraising materials, and new wording regarding our compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation.



Supplies of the envelope can be ordered through our online shop or by calling the National Office.

Free Will-Writing Service

If you applied to have your will written under the free will-writing service advertised in the May Vincentian Concern you should have received an information pack from the National Free Wills Network. This includes details of participating solicitors who are based close to where you live, as well as guidance on the information you need to provide to complete your application. Please note the date by which you need to complete and submit your form, which is highlighted in the covering letter. The offer expires after this date.

The offer of this service was met with such an enthusiastic response from members that the funds available to pay for the wills to be written will soon be exhausted. We are now unable to accept any further applications at the moment and the offer is now closed. However, as it proved so popular we will consider making it available again in the future, subject to funds being available. In the meantime, if you would like to register in advance for the next offer of the service please email Aisha McCarthy, Fundraising Officer at aisham@svp.org.uk and she will contact you when we are able to offer the service again. We will also keep you informed via updates and notices in Vincentian Concern and the members e-newsletter.

Society-Wide Fundraising Campaign

In the last edition of Vincentian Concern the new Board of Trustees outlined the details of their bold vision and ambitious plans to take the Society forward over the next five years. While they focus on Mission, Members and Money, it is the third of these that will make the first two possible. Plans for a Society-wide fundraising campaign are now in hand to raise the funds that will be needed to turn the plans into reality. The campaign methodology will be rooted in Vincentian values and delivered in accordance with the Fundraising Promise and Fundraising Code of Practice, both of which the Society is committed to as part of its membership of the Fundraising Regulator.

A Campaign Steering Group comprising trustees and other members will meet regularly over the months ahead to develop the fundraising strategy and oversee its piloting and implementation. Meanwhile, the fundraising function of the Society's website is being enhanced, to facilitate commitments to multi-year gifts to the Campaign.

If your Conference or Central Council may be interested in being part of a local pilot, please get in touch with Ken Madine, Head of Fundraising, Communications and Marketing at the National Office: kenm@svp.org.uk

Juliette Flach: An Introduction

My personal SVP journey began when I joined University 2 years ago. I had just arrived in Manchester and came along to the University Catholic Chaplaincy, where I was approached by a gentleman called Kensy who asked if I wanted to get involved with the University's SVP group. One thing led to another and by the January I was not only a member of the SVP 1833 group but had become President of it!

Whilst involved in the group, I saw such passion to help. Volunteers helping at a local breakfast club before their morning lectures, local Presidents dedicating years to support the work of the SVP and other charities keen to create links to ensure the best services possible could be provided. After leading the group for a year, a decision was made by the Conference to transition away from the SVP but I was personally keen to maintain links with the charity due to the great work I had witnessed so I decided to volunteer at the National Office.

SVP assists a variety of people, from the work of Conferences around England & Wales; to Mini Vinnies in schools; to Conferences abroad. All of which are supported by dedicated members of staff who are passionate to increase the SVP's ability to help those



who need it. I have been particularly involved in the Twinnage programmes, working with members of staff to create resources which will be coming to the website very soon; researching new approaches for the future and supporting current programs. It's been a great experience to be part of the 'behind the scenes' of the SVP and seeing the love of helping others mirrored both with members on the ground and in the office. Thank you, all involved in the SVP, for turning your concern into action.



Sara Sakipour: An Introduction

As a new member of the St Vincent de Paul Society I'm very excited to join the Young Vincentians team to help inspire schools and young people across England and Wales to turn their concern into action.

I have lived and studied in four different countries including Iran, India, Finland and the UK; travelling has given me greater perspective on life and shown me the beauty that can be found in diversity.

Over the past few years I have been involved in administrative and customer service positions, I have also volunteered at age UK Camden and British Red Cross. I know what makes me happy is to join a charity so that I can put together and utilise my cross-cultural communication, business administration and project management skills.

In my spare time I enjoy swimming, reading and travelling!

Sara Sakipour, Young Vincentians Administrative Assistant



Extending the hand of friendship

SVP National Office has received a spate of Vincentian visitors recently from abroad, including Vincentians from America, Australia and Guyana. It has been wonderful to meet members from different countries, and to share our experiences, challenges and successes.

There is always an immediate bond, a common purpose, a vision which unites us; the sense of Vincentian fraternity is self-evident. Along with charitable works and spiritual development, fraternity lies at the heart of the Vincentian vocation. It starts at the heart of the Conference, in visiting in pairs. This is not a new notion; it is founded firmly in biblical text. Jesus never sends anyone out alone, when he sent the 12 disciples out to preach the gospel he sent them in pairs. Two disciples were sent to find the donkey for Palm Sunday, while he sent Peter and John together to prepare for the Passover. In the SVP we should value this basic principle of visiting in pairs, and beyond that our fraternity at District, Central Council, National and International level. It underpins the Society and gives it strength. Fraternity is what underpins Blessed Frédéric's vision for a network of charity. It is in our respect and support for each other and in our Vincentian friendship, which should know no boundaries, that we find the strength to extend the hand of friendship to others.

Elizabeth Palmer, CEO



“ There is always an immediate bond, a common purpose, a vision which unites us; the sense of Vincentian fraternity is self-evident.”

Remembering those we have lost

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

Bernard Davis: Committed member and former President of the St Mary and St Petroc in Bodmin, Bernard will be very much missed by all at his Conference.

John Michael Lydon (Mike): A faithful member of the Holy Name Conference in Leeds, Mike was a great contributor to his Parish and was known for his kindness, faith and enthusiasm for life.

Shirley McCarthy: A faithful and long-time member of St Joseph's Conference at Gerrards Cross and Chalfont St Peter. She was a gentle and very kind lady who is greatly missed.

Margaret Mercer: Margaret was a very dedicated, long-serving member and Treasurer of St Joseph's Conference at Gerrards Cross and Chalfont St Peter. Margaret was a cheerful giver, life and soul of a true Vincentian. She is greatly missed.

May they rest in peace.

Where provided by a family member, full obituaries can be displayed on the main SVP website.

CHAS

Catholic Housing Aid Society

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

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

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

David Young's Charity

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

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

The trustees of the SVP have approved support of DYC. For further information, an application form or any guidance please contact: The Trustees of the David Young's Charity, Romero House, 55 Westminster Bridge Road, London, SE1 7JB. Visit the David Young's Charity website: www.davidyoungscharity.co.uk or email trustees@davidyoungscharity.co.uk

Registered Charity Number 238877.



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 and/or contact

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

info@stscholasticas.co.uk

Registered Charity: 203583



2018 Dates for the diary

Board Meetings

Wed 5th September

London National Office, Room 2M

Fri 29th September

Hinsley Hall, Leeds (for 1 hour)

Fri 26th & Sat 27th October

Hinsley Hall, Leeds (Residential)

Fri 23rd November

Hinsley Hall, Leeds
(Before National Council)

National Council Meetings

Fri 23rd – Sat 24th November

Hinsley Hall, Leeds

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**

Please pass it on!

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

Editorial Policy



St Vincent de Paul Society

England and Wales

Publisher
Executive Editor
Editorial Board

CD&P Limited
Elizabeth Palmer
Elizabeth Palmer, Helen O'Shea
& Ken Madine

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

Letters and articles for inclusion in the magazine should be preferably emailed to **rachaelc@svp.org.uk**. Please include a high-resolution digital image wherever possible.