

VincentianConcern



St Vincent de Paul Society (England and Wales)

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From our President

The past, present and future of our Society



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SVPEnglandWales



SVPEnglandandwales

I am writing this on 12 February 2019, a day that marks the 175th anniversary of the establishment of the SVP in England and Wales.

Adrian Abel, our former National President, is researching the history of the SVP in England and Wales and informs me that on 12 February 1844, 13 men met in the Sabloniere Hotel in Leicester Square, London, and agreed to form a Conference of the "Brotherhood of St Vincent de Paul". And so it began. By the end of 1844 there were five Conferences in London and by 1850 there were 18 throughout England. Today, as we know, there are around 1,000 Conferences in England and Wales alone.

It's a great milestone and underlines the longevity of our Society. So much good work has been done over those years by members coming together in prayer, action and friendship. The anniversary strikes me as reassuring and challenging: reassuring to know we are part of an enduring history, and challenging in that we are the custodians of this movement and responsible for its present and future. Thus, we are inspired by those before us and called upon to ensure the Society's regeneration and relevance today.

This is a call to each and every one of us to attract new members, and to find ways of addressing today's poverty, and I know efforts are being made up and down England and Wales to answer that call. In this edition of the Vincentian Concern you will read inspiring reports about ways the SVP is helping disadvantaged schoolchildren, about the impacts of SVP shops in the community, about how beneficiaries in our Blackfriars Support Centre in Newcastle are being helped, as well as the impact of some of our Twinnage programmes and children's camps.

My own Conference has recently reached out to the Leaving Care Team of our local council. Consequently, we have received many referrals for us to befriend and help young adults who are living independently after having come through the care system. This is a challenge to us in terms of feet on the ground, energy and resources, but it is so worthwhile. The challenge has kick-started us to greater recruitment, fundraising and making new applications for grants.

I am reminded and encouraged by the lovely words of David Williams in his introduction to 'The Mind and Heart of a Vincentian': "The Vincentian spirit implies creative imagination and originality, adaptation to new needs and strong and incisive action to help those who have been wounded by life. It leads us to surpass ourselves as we help the poor and the marginalised who are children of the Father and whose dignity derives from that fact."

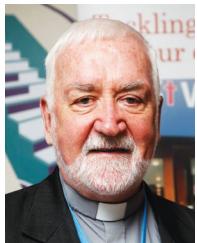
Thank you all for your continued custodianship of our precious Society.

Yours in St Vincent and Blessed Frédéric,

Helen O'Shea, National President

Turning concern into action: Blessed Rosalie Rendu DC and the SVP

Father Paul Roche talks about Jeanne-Marie Rendu and her collaboration with the SVP as a response to great need during revolutionary times.



Since 1844 the volunteers of the St Vincent de Paul Society have been engaged in a great variety of activities across England and Wales, faithfully following the inspiration of Blessed Frédéric and his group who formed the Society in Paris 11 years previously by turning their concern into action.

Those were times of political and social upheaval in both France and Britain. While France was in almost constant revolution since the Great Revolution, Britain was going through the Industrial Revolution, which brought widespread social change. People left the countryside and villages, pouring into the large towns and cities in search of work in the factories. Both countries saw new and extravagant wealth developing for the few, while the masses were plunged into new forms of near-slavery and miserable poverty.

To Frédéric Ozanam and his associates in the intellectual world of the Sorbonne University, in addition to the dreadful misery and poverty, the widespread rejection of religion and opposition to the Church was a real challenge. Lectures were given, meetings held, and a great variety of publications – including weekly Catholic papers – were utilised to show the real relevance of Catholicism not just for individuals, but for society as a whole. Frédéric's work gradually influenced the leaders of both church and state as they attempted to respond to the new poverty born in an industrialised society and a capitalist economy.

The little group of students and university teachers, mostly in their 20s, which Frédéric formed, was driven to action by the taunts of unbelievers: "Religion is dead. Where is the power of God today?" They began visiting poor families, carrying firewood, food and clothes to the poor in the crowded tenements. Initially they struggled to turn their concern into real practical action. Emmanuel Bailly, who printed their literature, also served as a guiding-hand for the group. He helped

them to formulate rules and gave the infant SVP a shape still recognisable to us today. In helping them to turn their concern into practical action he introduced them to Sister Rosalie Rendu of the Daughters of Charity.

In 1802 Jeanne-Marie Rendu joined the recently re-established Daughters of Charity, which had been abolished during the Reign of Terror associated with the Revolution. On joining she became Sister Rosalie. She was not yet 17 years of age, but filled with deep faith and driven by the need to respond to the poor whom she saw living in squalor in the poor regions of Paris. She was appointed to the poorest area of the city – the Mouffetard region.

She was to live there for 54 years, and through her endless and creative work became a national figure. Over the years, in response to the awful conditions all around, she opened a free clinic, a pharmacy, a school, took over the running of an orphanage, started a youth centre, a home for mothers and babies, and a home for the elderly. She worked with the officials of the Welfare Board which was set up by Napoleon III. From there she received vouchers for coal and food, which she gave to the poorest families. The little SVP was not able to get these vouchers directly, so Sister Rosalie supplied them, and also indicated the families who especially needed such weekly help. This work continued throughout two major revolutions (1830 and 1848), and also three particularly severe outbreaks of cholera with as many as 150 dying daily in the teeming Mouffetard region.

While Sister Rosalie and the Daughters of Charity remained in the Mouffetard region, the SVP quite rapidly spread to other regions and long before the death of Sister Rosalie the SVP had begun in England and Wales. The collaboration between Sister Rosalie and the young SVP however, brought great benefit to both parties, one coming to appreciate the wider context and causes of poverty and social exclusion, and the other learning more creative and direct hands-on practical assistance. Together and since 1844, these two organisations continue to turn their concern into action.





Feature: Homelessness



Vinnies' voices

We visit the SVP community support centre where volunteers are coming face-to-face with members of the homeless community in a mutually enriching experience. Anita Boniface and Dounya Lahmami tell us more.

St Vincent's Blackfriars in Newcastle is a hive of activity. Every Tuesday during lunch time the heartbeat of friendship and mutual exchange finds a place. The bright, spacious, beautifully decorated hall has been flowing with a steady stream of hungry service users ever since the clock struck 11. About 100 men and women from around the local area have filed into the centre to receive a free hot meal, cake and hot drinks at the 'Vinnies' Tuesday lunch. There's a lively hum of chatter and laughter to be heard throughout the building. People are directed to a table, where they are waited on by volunteers and receive a full table service.

One Vinnies service user, Joanna tells me: "It's 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." These Vinnies service users are people who have often had, through no fault of their own other than a turn of misfortune or a troubled childhood, awful experiences happen in their lives. Some of them may have been in prison for serious crimes. Many have ended up on the street, in a hostel or bedsit or sofa surfing, while others come to Blackfriars simply in need of friendship as well as the hot plate of food and a smile.

I speak to a number of diners to hear their stories as we eat together. Jane and Malcolm are married and live in a flat in Whitley Bay. "I have people I can talk to. The volunteers are always listening, and they are friendly and I know I can tell them what's been going on," says Jane.

Vinnies couldn't run without the help of many hardworking and enthusiastic volunteers. Kevin is a Corporate Volunteer from Marks and Spencer's. He, alongside seven of his colleagues, spent his annual charity day serving food to service users at Vinnies. He says: "It's a very good cause. We help people on low incomes, people who are feeling low, people who are homeless – they all have somewhere to go and chat. It's a very good cause indeed."

Reflecting on his experience at Vinnies, Kevin says: "I felt really moved when I was there. People are so appreciative of what they get. It was overwhelming how grateful they were."

"I have people I can talk to. The volunteers are always listening, and they are friendly and I know I can tell them what's been going on."

"I come to Vinnies for a cuppa and hot meal," says Lucy. She is homeless and is living between friends, sofa surfing. After being separated from her family and losing her home, she has spent time living in "bin shoots in a block of flats" where "there was privacy, and it was safe and warm". She says that Vinnies is "welcoming, friendly and amazing – it does a lot for people." After Lucy's mother died, her mental health deteriorated and she lost her home. On the streets she was unable to access the healthcare she needed and feels she "fell off the map and was out of the game". Thanks to the friendship and support at St Vincent's Blackfriars Centre, Lucy now says: "I am getting there. Things are getting better. We are lucky to have Vinnies."

Mark is a mental health service user, and it's his first day at the centre as a volunteer. He's being accompanied by his Community Link Worker, and between them they are learning the ropes as Mark, who is six foot three, weaves his way through the tables and chairs to collect plates, serve food, and take orders.

Since Mark's epilepsy diagnosis he hasn't worked. He says volunteering at Blackfriars is a way of helping more people. "When you have lived on the streets yourself it's nice to know that when you're volunteering and helping out you can help other people get back on their feet as well, instead of leaving them on the street."

Timmy, who used to be homeless, now volunteers at Vinnies. Timmy was taken into foster care when he was a child because his parents were alcoholics. "I lost touch with my mum and dad and started knocking around with the wrong people," he says. Timmy eventually ended up in prison and was released about two years ago.

"I was begging on the streets because I didn't want to claim benefits. I was paranoid that someone might send me back to prison if I had anything to do with anyone in authority," says Timmy. He was using all his begging money on spice and heroin. He had nowhere to go. At this time he discovered Vinnies through another homeless person. "I started coming here to the Tuesday drop-in. Then I came on other days as well and someone said, why don't you volunteer? Blackfriars staff member Emma helped me to fill out all the forms and I started to work in Vinnies as a volunteer."

Living on the streets made Timmy feel "really down".

“ It’s the first time I’ve ever lived somewhere I can be proud to call my own.”

He hadn't told anyone at Vinnies that he was sleeping rough. "One day I told them that I wanted to kill myself and they found out that I had nowhere to stay. Seeing the need, staff at Blackfriars referred Timmy onto the St Vincent's hostel next door where he has been able to stay safely.

"I've now got a secure roof over my head and it's the first time I've ever lived somewhere I can be proud to call my own. I've now got my first ever rent receipt, and if I keep up a good record of paying my rent and keep volunteering, it will help me to learn the skills I need to live independently and I will be able to put all the experiences I'm having here towards getting my own home, and one day getting a job." says Timmy.

To anyone considering volunteering at or donating to St Vincent's Blackfriars, Kevin, Corporate Volunteer from Marks and Spencer's says: "Do it. Just for the experience alone. You see what it's like... it's an amazing job and you get so much satisfaction from it."



If you'd like to find out more about St Vincent's Blackfriars

telephone Emma Bell on **0191 261 6023** or email **EmmaB@svp.org.uk**



Love and distant countries

What do love, neighbours, distant countries, safeguarding and future stars all have in common? Well, they all came together on a sunny day for Portsmouth Central Council's annual festival meeting.

National President, Helen O'Shea, attended and spoke about the work of the Society in England and Wales, including the new Tower House Café and how it supports people with dementia.

Helen also talked of some of the SVP's work internationally and surprised the audience with some amazing statistics such as that there are more than 800,000 SVP members worldwide, and that SVP baby feeding centres are feeding over 6,000 babies and children in Sudan and South Sudan.

Stephen Hogg delivered a presentation on Twinnage and talked, in particular, about the devastating flooding in Kerala. He explained how the state authorities are repairing infrastructure while the SVP is repairing lives, and that, besides the impressive total of donations received in response to the appeal in England and Wales, there are hundreds of stories of renewed hope.



Louise Piper and Helen O'Shea

Despite the closure of the M27 motorway, future stars of the SVP attended the festival – 14 Mini Vinnies from Bournemouth, accompanied by their dedicated teachers and supported by Anne Johnson. They provided a heart-warming summary of their activities, including how they had a sleep-out in cardboard boxes to raise funds for the homeless.

Finally, Safeguarding Officer Catherine Kerr provided the audience with an unexpected slant on the topic of safeguarding. Instead of dwelling on the Society's legal obligations as a registered charity, she described safeguarding from a theological viewpoint. We have a duty to love our neighbours and protect them with every means at our disposal, she said.

Martin Allen, secretary of Portsmouth Central Council, said: "We would like to say thank you to all the speakers who made this festival meeting welcoming, interesting as well as informative."

SVP talks politics at House of Commons



Helen with Steve Gill,
vice-president of
Northampton CC

SVP National President, Helen O'Shea and Chief Executive, Elizabeth Palmer, attended the annual parliamentary reception held at the House of Commons by Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN), an organisation representing Catholic charities of which the SVP is a member.

In the elegant surroundings of the Churchill Room (complete with a bronze bust of Winston Churchill himself), the Bishop of Middlesbrough, the Rt Rev Terence Drainey, made a speech calling on politicians to use their influence to reform housing, planning and

land regulation in order to encourage participation and solidarity in communities.

Bishop Terry urged politicians to give greater preference to housing developments that are community-owned and led, and said they should encourage social connections in local neighbourhoods to build trust and participation in communities. He told parliamentarians: "I encourage you to take further measures that support local enterprise and the long-term future of local amenities."

Among guests at the event were Phil Kerton, Co-Director of the charity 'Seeking Sanctuary' and member of the SVP's Social Justice Committee; Steve Gill, vice-president of the SVP's Northampton Central Council; Margaret Clark, president of Middlesbrough District Council, and the Archbishop of Southwark, the Most Rev Peter Smith.

Birmingham Central Council celebrate service

On Sunday 20 January members of Birmingham Central Council and surrounding Conferences came together to celebrate Mass at Our Lady & All Saints, Stourbridge. During the Mass John Lewis of Kingswinford Conference was awarded with a long service certificate for his many years of dedication.

John joined the SVP in 1955, as a member of St Francis of Assisi, Newcastle-upon-Tyne Conference. He subsequently became a member of two other Conferences in Newcastle, followed by Conferences in Harrogate, Stourbridge and Kingswinford, being President of the latter. Along the way he was also President of Dudley District.

Birmingham Central Council President Clare O'Brien presented John with a certificate, signed by the National President Helen O'Shea, recognising and thanking him



for his outstanding service over so many years. Clare also read out a message of greetings and thanks from St Robert's Conference in Harrogate.

Additionally, John was advised that, rather than present him with a gift, Birmingham Central Council will donate funds to the Indian sponsorship appeal, thus giving several young children a year's education in John's name. SVP members and other parishioners then enjoyed a splendid buffet, organised by members of Our Lady & All Saints, Stourbridge Conference.

Hello from her and goodbye from him



Winston Waller has stood down as President of Southwark Central Council at the conclusion of his five-year term of office, and new President, Geraldine Hibbert, marked the occasion by making a presentation to her predecessor at his last ever Central Council meeting.

At the event at Our Lady and St Philip Neri in Sydenham, south London, Geraldine presented Winston with a framed certificate and a hand-carved statue of St Vincent de Paul as a mark of gratitude from all the members of the Central Council. In a short speech of thanks, Winston said: "In future years the statue will remind me of an important and special time in my life. The past five years have been a privilege."

He thanked all the District presidents for their hard work, as well as the CC officers including Jane Hill, Secretary; David Wiles, Twinnage representative; and Jeremy De Souza, Treasurer. Winston had particular thanks for Southwark's Youth Development Officer, his wife Joanna Waller, "who's done a wonderful job", and his successor, Geraldine Hibbert. Despite concluding his term of office, Winston won't be putting his feet up; he'll still be continuing his responsibilities as a trainer in Southwark, as well as a member of the Social Justice Committee, and, of course, he'll remain an active member of his Conference at Our Lady Immaculate in Whitstable, Kent.



St Cuthbert's is strictly tea dancing

For some years, St Cuthbert's Conference, Withington, Manchester has been organising a weekly tea dance for 30 to 40 older people at the Church Hall.

Students from Manchester University often volunteer their help and are shown the steps to dances such as the barn dance, boston two-step, square line tango and veleta. Other dances, such as the rumba, cha-cha-cha and melody foxtrot, are not so easy to learn and the young academics can only gaze in amazement as graceful ladies and gentlemen, some wearing spangled dancing shoes, glide across the floor in perfect harmony. During the interval, there is time to rest and chat over a cup of tea. Recently, one of the student volunteers from Beijing demonstrated the Chinese tea ceremony and everyone tasted a different type of 'cuppa'. The same student, a gifted soprano singer, also performed opera extracts.



The benefits of weekly exercise and social interaction are evident, and many of those attending look much younger than their years. The eldest attendee there is a lady of 101 and, although no longer a dancer, she enjoys the friendly conversation and companionship.

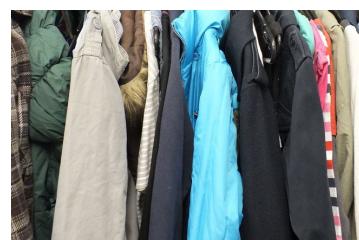
The success of the tea dance in the local community has encouraged a local housing association to donate funds to replace the tired CD player with a new monster sound system.

Countries and generations coming together

Members of the Good Shepherd Conference, St Leonard's on Sea, hosted a small party to celebrate one of their Eritrean friends at last getting her leave to remain after waiting nearly 12 years for a decision.

She currently shares accommodation with a young Albanian mother and child and a Somalian woman who both insisted on helping, and together with the guest of honour, provided large dishes of amazing, cross-cultural food. The party was attended by most of the local Eritrean and Albanian communities, together with their children. As the evening wore on three generations of family members joined in. It was a very happy event that was enjoyed by all. SVP members are often humbled by the amazing sense of hospitality shown by those from different cultures so it was good to reciprocate in a small way.

Warm coats from SVP warm hearts



Dudley District Council in the West Midlands has been collecting overcoats from a number of parishes in the area to give to men leaving prison during the winter months.

Last issue of Vincentian Concern reported how, if prisoners are arrested in summer, when they come to be released they often find themselves coming out of prison in the same summer clothing, even if it's the middle of winter.

This issue arose at HM Prison Hewell in Worcestershire and the Prison Chaplain's Department appealed to the SVP for help. Four Conferences in Dudley DC – Halesowen, Sedgley, Stourbridge and Tipton – arranged for parish collections of warm coats for distribution to the ex-offenders.

Mike Weaver, president of Our Lady & St Kenelm, Halesowen, reports that Dudley District was able to provide HMP Hewell with no less than 80 warm coats.

See our Prisons Update feature on page 11.

Care at Christmas

In common with most Conferences around the country, members at Our Lady of Sorrows in Peckham, south London, had a busy Christmas bringing seasonal cheer to local people in need.

They put together some festive Christmas hampers, complete with wicker baskets, containing food, toiletries and treats. These were delivered to a range of people including a family nominated by the parish primary school, and someone who had been going through difficulties resulting from the switch to Universal Credit.

Immediately after Christmas, the members were off to the Crisis at Christmas warehouse in nearby Bermondsey to collect excess food.

Every year Crisis feeds thousands of homeless people over the festive period and, after Christmas, they offer

the excess food to the SVP in south London. Conferences from all over the capital collected food products that would otherwise have gone to waste.



The Our Lady of Sorrows team supplied fresh food including gammon joints, butter, potatoes, sugar and bacon, to 25 families. In addition, the parish food bank was restocked with canned goods and other long-life products.

Conference Secretary, Lorna Thomas, commented: "It was an amazing and humbling feeling knowing we made such a difference to people's lives. Many of the families are going through hardship and one said she had eight children, so it's good to know that thanks to the SVP and Crisis they'll be able to eat well."

New Conference at HMP Manchester

A new Conference has been formed among prisoners at HM Prison Manchester under the administration and guidance of Roman Catholic lay chaplain, James Gallogly.



Called St Thomas More Conference, it's in Manchester Central Council. HMP Manchester is a Category A prison and a quarter of the men are Catholic with many of them regularly attending Mass. The new Conference is electing a President and other officers and will follow standard SVP format except that members won't be able to attend district meetings – the lay chaplain will represent them at District Council level.

The main work of members will be to befriend and support fellow prisoners, many of whom can become lonely and isolated.

SVP members are also supporting prisoners at other prisons including Garth, Liverpool, Berwyn, Wakefield and Coldingley.

St Columba celebrates service

St Columba's Conference in Halifax celebrated a Mass late last year to commemorate the long service of two of their members, Margaret Burke for 25 years of service and Maurice Kidney for 20.

Margaret held the position of secretary to the Conference while Maurice is the now former treasurer. Parish priest Mgr Michael McQuinn presented a medal to Maurice at the monthly coffee morning and to Margaret on Sunday during Mass.





National Meeting

Attend the National Meeting 2019

This June will see the biennial SVP National Meeting take place at Loughborough University in Leicestershire. Members from all over the country will hear a range of top speakers explore the theme of 'Building the Kingdom'.

Taking place on 21 and 22 June, this year's SVP National Meeting will be a major event in the Society's calendar.

The venue, Loughborough University, was chosen as 'The Times University of the Year 2019' and has renowned facilities on a 438-acre campus on the former Burleigh Hall estate. Situated in the market town of Loughborough in the Midlands, it is conveniently accessible from all parts of the country.

A host of top-flight speakers will be taking part in the event, including:

Mark McGreevy OBE, Group Chief Executive of homelessness charity, Depaul International. He joined the newly-founded Depaul in 1990 and within two years was appointed CEO. In 2014, he founded the Institute of Global Homelessness and in 2017 was asked by the Vincentian Family to coordinate the Famvin Homeless Alliance. He is a former trustee of CAFOD and in 2015 he was awarded an OBE for his work with homeless people.

Dr Johnson Varghese, National President of SVP India. The Society was first introduced in India in 1852. Since then it has grown to become a vast organisation with more than 68,000 members. Johnson has been National President since 2015. SVP England and Wales is twinned with SVP India and during the recent catastrophic floods in Kerala, we raised around £400,000 of aid. Johnson, whose own home was flooded in the disaster, oversaw the SVP's life-saving work in the region.

Sean Ryan, Caritas National Co-ordinator for Community Sponsorship of refugees. A former professional actor, musician and schools music provider, Sean has worked with young offenders, adults with learning difficulties, the frail and terminally ill.

Michael McMahon, President of the SVP's East Anglia Central Council. He is also president of North Norfolk Conference and has also been instrumental in founding Cromer House, a house of multiple occupation for homeless people in Sheringham, Norfolk.



Helen O'Shea, National President of SVP England & Wales. Announced as the first woman National President at the last National Meeting in Liverpool in 2017, Helen is a mother of three and a former barrister from Cardiff. She has long been an active SVP member at her Conference in Highbury, north London, where she now lives.

Under the theme of 'Building the Kingdom', the speakers will explore different topics such as:

- **Working to combat homelessness**
- **Welcoming the asylum seeker**
- **Working to alleviate economic poverty**
- **Valuing the older person**
- **Engaging young Catholics**
- **Working with offenders**

As well as the main speaker sessions there will also be a series of practical workshops, plus the ever-popular social side including a formal three-course dinner on the Friday night. The whole event will conclude with Mass on Saturday afternoon. Delegates can book accommodation at different price levels or they can attend as day-delegates.

CEO Elizabeth Palmer, says: "We're delighted to be hosting this, our latest National Meeting and to be welcoming SVP members and others from the Vincentian family. I invite everyone to attend to celebrate together our Vincentian charism and to learn from our expert speakers and from each other how to build a kingdom where all are welcomed and valued."

Pre-booking of tickets and accommodation for the National Meeting 2019 is now open. Download a booking form from www.svp.org.uk



Ex-prisoner: how SVP can help us

In a follow-up to last issue's coverage of different ways that the SVP works with prisoners, ex-offender Donald Johnson (not his real name) gives an insight into how Conferences can help men and women when they are released from prison.

There are three distinct types of people released from prison – those who go home to their families, those who move to supervised accommodation, and those with no accommodation to go to and so are reliant on local authority social housing or the private rented sector. These three different categories of ex-offenders have different sets of needs.

Those who go home to their families are commonly well provided for. However, many ex-offenders feel they ought to leave all possessions behind in prison and often come out without thought of first-night necessities such as toothbrush, shower gel, deodorant, razor and shaving foam.

I am sure that the various people they'll meet in the first couple of days would be grateful if the ex-offender could turn up smelling a little sweeter than when he was in prison, and that's one way that SVP members can help.

More substantial assistance is needed for those moving to approved premises like the SVP's own Ozanam House and St Christopher's in Newcastle, or who are being electronically tagged. Due to the nature of parole and the Home Detention Curfew tagging system, prisoners' release can often be rushed.

These ex-offenders are moving to what is, in effect, a stepping stone between prison and the 'real world' and they need help with obtaining items like seasonally-appropriate, non-prison clothing. It's often the case that if a person was arrested in the summer wearing shorts and a T-shirt, for example, that's all they'll have to wear when they're released – even if it's the middle of winter!

The prisoner will receive a modest discharge grant from the prison authorities. Unfortunately, for most men, the first thing they'll buy is cigarettes and alcohol, not leaving much for food, so if the SVP could provide them with a voucher for their local food bank it would help them get over the first few days.

However, it is those who are released with no accommodation and are reliant on their local authority



or the private rented sector that are most in need of help from the SVP. Many can't afford the deposit and initial rent on a flat. Often they arrive at their local council offices and declare themselves homeless.

Fortunately, rents can be reasonable in houses of multiple occupation but when someone moves in they often find there is no furniture so they will need help obtaining a basic second-hand bed, wardrobe, and table and chairs, as well as other essentials like crockery, cutlery, pots and pans, towels, duvet cover, an iron, pen and paper and a radio.

Newly-released former prisoners would also benefit from access to a bicycle – around £30 to £50 secondhand – to help them get a job and to enable them to travel to and from mandatory probation meetings. Alternatively, an all-areas bus pass for the first week or two would be helpful.

All people who leave prison would appreciate a basic internet-capable mobile phone as you cannot claim Universal Credit without access to the internet, and after your first appointment at Jobcentre Plus you are required to log in daily, online, to maintain your work search.

And here's one final suggestion: it should be remembered that you can only advise former prisoners on what they should be doing. They have had years of people telling them what to do, so if you are providing assistance it should be packaged in such a way as the person himself makes the decisions.



Conference Innovation



Growing children in the Greenhouse

A psychologically informed, Christ-centred approach taken by head teacher Andrew Rannard and staff at De La Salle Secondary School in St Helens, Merseyside is turning children, some of whom can be angry, disruptive and aggressive into model students. Anita Boniface reports.

Here, where pupils enter Year 7 often suffering childhood trauma, learning difficulties and behavioural challenges, the teachers have set up a Vincentian 'Greenhouse Project', funded and supported by the SVP. The project gives troubled children another chance to learn and improve their behaviour by providing tailored, individual and small group attention in a separate space during lessons. It offers a model of how to improve the behaviour of disempowered, disenfranchised children who ordinarily feel alienated from the learning environment.

Within a separate classroom where up to 16 students receive lessons in English, Mathematics, Geography, Spanish, and History, children are improving in leaps and bounds. In the first 12 weeks of The Greenhouse, the average improvement in reading and writing was 11 months. This phenomenal result was achieved initially through teachers across the school using spare periods to spend time with the children in The Greenhouse. After proving successful it was decided the project would be sustained with a dedicated primary level teacher being brought in to teach in the current academic year.

The children in The Greenhouse have often been disadvantaged disproportionately because they cannot keep up with standard lessons and who, because of behavioural problems, are often excluded or disciplined negatively in other educational settings. The project's aim is to build trust, restore a sense of emotional safety and wellbeing, and ultimately foster learning. It does this by adapting the curriculum to meet their academic, social and emotional needs.

The foundation stone, says Anna De'Ath (project manager) is seeing the good and potential for good in these children, and understanding that "all behaviour is communication". Therefore when a child 'acts up' and misbehaves, the teachers understand the child is trying to express an unmet need he or she does not know how to articulate. The teachers consider it their duty to interpret that need, and find ways to meet it. It requires compassion, respect and enormous efforts to build trust.

Building trust is essential. Greenhouse teacher Alex Neil explains: "Often these children have disrupted attachment styles, and their ability to relate to adults has been hindered." However, through building trust the children develop and demonstrate reciprocity,

respect and a burgeoning sense of self-worth. As part of a Catholic school, all De La Salle teachers believe in the power of a Christ-centred, relational and therefore Trinitarian approach for all teaching and learning. The values of the project are typically Vincentian, involving seeing Christ in the children, and treating each child according to their own individual uniqueness.

Ian Kempsell, a trustee of the SVP and president of the local SVP group explains how initially his group became involved in helping the school. “We realised the way to reach families was no longer through church, where attendance was limited, but through Catholic schools themselves. We started to provide the financial means to meet the practical needs of children experiencing hardship. We helped the school purchase material items – coats, PE kits, uniforms and books for example – for students and their families”. According to Anna, these practical items became “our gestures of support that enable us to engage and build positive relationships with that young person and their families.”

“Without the support of the SVP this much-needed project would not have been possible.”

The teachers themselves have formed an SVP group in the school. Becoming SVP members allowed teachers a powerful “way in” to reaching parents and families, usually sceptical of education and cautious about authorities. “As part of the SVP we teachers could take off our jackets, remove our lanyards and visit parents and families in their homes, just as all SVP members do, not as an authority figure, but as a volunteer. The families responded really well and in time we were being invited in for cups of tea, and parents are now offering their time at the school themselves,” says Anna.

One parent of a child in the Greenhouse project reported his son is “more confident in his abilities, and also more willing to tackle difficult and challenging learning. We have seen him grow and settle which had been very difficult for him because of his autism spectrum disorder and dyslexia.”

Another parent was so overwhelmed at the behavioural and emotional change in his child, that he created a garden area for the students to maintain, proving very therapeutic. Another family reported that because the project had encouraged their daughter to stop playing truant and instead enjoy and therefore attend lessons,

the mother was able to find work and now had a job.

There have been challenges, and Anna says that the children, often because of neurological conditions and behavioural difficulties need specific, individual treatment. “It’s not a one-size-fits-all approach,” says Anna. The use of ‘kick-bands’, fidget spinners, plasticine and putty allow children to fidget and calm themselves through repetitive motions using props and materials. This process triggers chemicals in their brains that allow them to concentrate and settle better.”

Learning is facilitated by specific adaptations that aren’t usually possible in a mainstream lesson. “We also understand that some children, because of their conditions, get overstimulated and overwhelmed which can lead them to be very disruptive,” Anna explains. However, a quiet room which consists of bare white walls and simple furniture, plus a sensory room containing beanbags, glow lights, soft furnishings that children can dive onto and punch, help children cope with their excess energy. “These things calm them down, and help them return to the classroom more ready to learn.” Anna also believes that having the right staff is paramount. “An appropriate level teacher, who is flexible, hands on, compassionate, and who can adapt and change lesson plans at the drop of a hat, is ideal for the job. It is essential to give your staff training, utilising the educational psychologist to disseminate knowledge and expertise. In this way you get a whole school involvement.”

Head teacher Andrew Rannard says: “Without the support of the SVP this much-needed project would not have been possible.” The value of having external support is reflected by Joanne Davies, Senior Assistant Director of Education at St Helens Council. Joanne says: “The spiritual, practical and financial support of the SVP has enabled De La Salle, with the help of a primary teacher and the teachers’ SVP group, to help families feel well supported. Now, their children are better able to face the challenges of transitioning to secondary education.”

The message is clear. Anna says: “For so many of our students, school becomes church. We are acutely aware of our responsibility and privilege to bring Gospel values to life through our every interaction with all in this school and the wider community.”

It is through this endeavour to “support the holistic development of students and their families,” that teachers have shown themselves determined and capable of removing social, emotional and economic barriers to education.



A vision of a better world

This article is based on a recent speech to an SVP festival meeting in Birmingham by Clare Short, the former Labour MP for Birmingham Ladywood and Secretary of State for International Development in Tony Blair's government until she famously resigned in protest over the Iraq war. She retired from Parliament in 2010. Her mother, Joan Short, and uncle, Frank O'Loughlin, were both active members of the SVP.

My topic is 'the Sermon on the Mount, the SVP and the state of Britain and the world'. When I chose it I was thinking of two verses: "Blessed are the poor" and "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill."

I wanted to make the link between the acts of kindness and care to individuals, which is the constant work of those who volunteer to work for the SVP, and the wider quest for a more just, kind and sustainable world order. Contrary to the argument made by some, acts of kindness and charity are not an alternative to a quest for a more just society, but are stepping stones towards it.

It is notable that the SVP started in 1833 as a debating society. Following taunts of "call yourselves Christians, what do you care about the poor", they resolved there had been enough talk and it was time for action, and they went out into the streets and brought material assistance and listened to the needs of those living in poverty.

One might argue that something similar is happening now with Pope Francis' focus on the needs of the poor, and the need for us to reorder the way we live to make the world sustainable, and the attacks he faces from parts of the establishment within the Church, who want to turn back the wonderful breath of new life, of mercy and radicalism Pope Francis is bringing to renew the Church.

The freedom to go shopping

I think we live at a time when people are feeling increasingly powerless. Most know that things are not right both in the UK and across the world and yet there is an overwhelming feeling that one can do little about it. I think to myself that if my granny, the mother of my SVP activist mother and uncle, could come back and see how we live now, she would be astonished how many possessions most people have and how unhappy so many people are. We have built a society where freedom is dominantly the freedom to go shopping and to consume. I have a friend who manages a number of

those storage blocks that are dotted across the country, where firms, for example, store paperwork they do not have room for. But my friend tells me that half of the space is taken up with domestic possessions. People have so much stuff that they don't have room for it and so pay to store it while others don't have enough to eat.

Britain is the fifth richest country in the world. Many of us are more comfortable than our forebears could ever have dreamed of, yet there are many who are poor materially and many more who are lonely and unhappy.

Troublingly, the economic and social model that is spreading across the world is not a model that makes most people happy. It is not sustainable, climate change and the destruction of natural resources will bring untold crisis and trouble unless we change this social and economic model.

The paradox of altruism

We are living at a time of unprecedented knowledge, technological capacity and the availability of capital. It is completely possible for all the people of the world to have access to all that they need to live a civilised life. And if all could have enough, then it would give us the chance to start to live sustainably and not seek more and more material goods.

And as you also know, trying to do good makes you happy. This is a paradox. If you help others in order to gain praise, it will not work. As Matthew says: "Be careful not to parade your good deeds before men to attract notice... so when you give alms, do not have it trumpeted before you, this is what hypocrites do... to win men's admiration." But genuinely giving of yourself and helping to make others feel cared for and happy, makes you happy. That is the paradox of altruism.

And the conclusion is quite simple, by trying to do good and hungering and thirsting for what is right, it is possible to spread a vision of a better world order and help to bring it into being.

Catholic Social Thinking and the Vincentian Vocation

Kevin Flanagan, director of the St Antony Centre, Manchester describes to Anita Boniface his vision of how Catholic Social Thinking connects with the Vincentian vocation.

Catholic Social Teaching, or Thinking (CST), continually developed through papal encyclicals, is often referred to as the Church's 'best kept secret'. At its heart is the belief in the "value and dignity of every human person".

This belief that every individual has an implicit dignity and is worthy of respect, together with the rights and responsibilities around this, is the key to social justice. According to Kevin, social justice is the "bridge between the beautiful honorific vision of the Gospel values, and the often hard and harsh realities of everyday life". SVP members are called to "be the bridge, the intermediary between the ideals of the Gospel, and this often unjust and difficult reality". Kevin describes how members 'draw down' the vision of the Gospel and through practising Gospel values implement this vision in the world.

This process is working toward the 'Common Good' which Kevin describes as: "The search after, identification and maintenance of all those necessary conditions that enable a person to be most fully human – that enable their dignity to flourish – to live out the Gospel and be more like God."

SVP members, because of the Vincentian values of non-judgement and seeing Christ in every human person – the potential for good in everyone – honour the value and dignity integral to the Gospel vision for the person.

"Members," Kevin says, "are the hands, eyes, feet of Christ." As with all CST, there is the imperative to 'see, judge and act' in all Vincentian work – observing the need, discerning what to do and then taking action. In all that process "members are conduits of the Holy Spirit."

CST recognises the right to association – intermediary bodies that are advocates for people who are vulnerable, defending their rights. Members, are intermediaries for the poor, helping them access basic rights that enable them to be "more fully human" and flourish.

"Part of CST is challenging and standing up to injustice wherever we see it," says Kevin. And in the case of the



SVP this happens through the practical help members provide but also through the conversations that members have.

Charities, in that they hold a mirror to the world, shining the Gospel values onto the society they reflect, are not neutral. But neither are they political. They do so, based on the firm foundations of CST and the ideals at its heart, working across dividing lines in order to build a better world.

Volunteers are at the centre of this. In a world where workers have become viewed as 'economic units', Kevin says, and success has been measured purely by "profit and gain", volunteers are counter culture and stand for something vital.

"Members are God's labourers in the vineyard." They crystallise the vision of vocation. "We are formed by our work, but we also form society by what we do. If the Gospel values and vision is our driving force behind our actions, then our work is formed by the Gospel and the Gospel forms us and our wider contribution."

Kevin is a keen believer that "rather than the person being for work, work is for the person." Volunteering is the purest sense of this. It is not measured by monetary gain, it is not done for personal profit. It challenges the principles of the free market and consumerism at the most personal level.

It places faith and goodness ahead of profit and gain.



CSP Spotlight

The heart of the community

Localism is at the centre of the 40 St Vincent's community shops around the country. Based in the heart of often diverse, multicultural communities with contrasting levels of wealth and deprivation, the SVP's retail operation provides a unique, often personal service to suit the needs of local people. We examine how St Vincent's serve their local communities, how they can enhance and extend the work of members, and what members can do to help their local branch.

Kate Nightingale heads up Community Support Projects (CSPs) including shops, and explains: "St Vincent's are more than just charity shops. Their employees and volunteers are sympathetic to the aims of the SVP and, wherever possible, extend the work of the membership, supporting, and signposting customers, some of whom might be very vulnerable."

Eighty per cent of branches are situated on large housing estates and away from town centres. People they serve would often struggle to afford the bus fare into town so Kate says the shops can be a "lifeline" for the local community and often the only available means of affording low-cost goods. The remaining 15% of St Vincent's shops are based on high streets, and 5% in city centres.

The high street and city centre shops' customer base is generally more affluent and prices reflect this. These shops are here to generate a larger surplus income for the wider society although all shops are required to create a minimum financial return. Kate says: "The whole of St Vincent's mantra is 'helping locally'. What we do is local – we price locally, we stock locally and we employ locally."

Philip Kojcinovic is head of retail at the SVP and oversees all St Vincent's shops together with his team of area managers. He explains that in the 80% of neighbourhood St Vincent's shops, "we know nearly all of our customers by name. People will come in and talk to the shop manager about what's happening in their lives. A manager could be the first place of engagement with the wider SVP, helping someone sort out their debt or housing issue through signposting or just listening."

This sentiment is reflected by area manager for the south, Helen Voyce. Helen speaks of how St Vincent's are excellent at balancing the "compassionate, caring and loving values of the SVP, and running a very efficient



business to generate income." Helen believes that "the more ethical we are, operating with integrity, the better the business is. We get repeat customers, people who want to work for us, happy volunteers and happy clients."

Volunteers can be very diverse and generally fall into two categories. "Some, like refugees, have received support and help and want to give something back to the SVP. Others have needs themselves, and come to enhance their self-confidence, work skills and become part of the family and we see them grow," says Helen.

Steve Milburn is area manager for the north east where there is a high level of deprivation due to the collapse of the mining, shipbuilding and steel industries. This led to a high level of unemployment from the 1980s onwards, and Steve explains that "we are now seeing the second or third generation of unemployment." It has lots of knock-on effects on the community like drug and alcohol addiction, mental illness and loneliness. "There can be a sense of hopelessness in some places due to the limited opportunities," Steve says.

"However, our shops bring hope. In some areas we're the only community shop there. Due to unemployment and poverty, people have almost given up. The shops provide employment, help build people's self-esteem and provide work experience to help school leavers."

Volunteers are given valuable customer service skills such as answering the phone or operating tills which they can use in paid employment later.

Steve says that when he first joined the SVP he “wondered why on earth people gave up their time to volunteer. But now I see that volunteers get loads out of it because it helps them with their mental health problems or loneliness. People get back onto the road to recovery and gain their confidence. It’s the reason I’m still here 10 years later.”

The personal touch that St Vincent’s shops give everyone who walks through their door, applies to volunteers and customers alike. This is illustrated at the Pontypridd St Vincent’s shop in South Wales where manager Pam Ashworth tells of one particular volunteer who has an exceptional story.

She explains that there is a large homeless community in Pontypridd and the shop often stocks sleeping bags and warm clothes for them. After they provided a tent and cooking stove for one homeless man, Derek, he started to come in more regularly for a hot cup of tea and a chat. Soon the staff and Derek got to know each other and he started volunteering and helping out.

Pam says: “Despite Derek’s schizophrenia, being around people and in the warmth seemed to really help his mental health. When he was depressed we stepped back, and gave him space to talk about what was troubling him. He was with us for four months, and then he managed to get a paid job on a building site.” He still comes back to St Vincent’s to say hello. It’s a prime example of a volunteer feeling valued and wanting to return.

“Agony aunts as well as managers.”

In a similar way, Bradford manager Annette Haigh explains: “Our shop managers have to be agony aunts as well as managers.” She describes how people “depend on the shops for company, warmth and support”.

“We have helped people through domestic violence and debt and signposted them to SVP members. Sometimes our shop managers and their teams are the only people an older person sees all week. They can help alleviate that person’s loneliness.”

Annette describes how shops can really be a hub of the community, extending their reach into the wider

community as well. Brighouse shop regularly participates with full fervour in local council initiatives like ‘1940s Weekend’. “Everyone in the shop gets dressed up and we sell vintage items that we’ve saved all year – shoes, trilbies, fox furs, pearls and jewellery. It’s tremendous fun”.

Josh Dutch, shop manager at Tremorfa St Vincent’s near Cardiff, provides another example of the community work being done by St Vincent’s. “We saw the need for friendship and decided to start up a community day. Now, every Friday we clear a space, bring out chairs and tables, and provide tea and cakes so that people can catch up and share what’s going on in their lives. It gives volunteers and staff the opportunity to know the local community and say thank you to our donors and customers who are very generous.”

St Vincent’s shops play a vital role in extending the ethos of the SVP by being part of their local community. Kate says she would love members to visit their local shops and provide real feedback.

“I’d love more members to get involved in our shops. They are at the coalface of communities and have a key role in helping ensure that shops live the SVP values. By volunteering in our shops and by helping gather important and much needed donations our members can really help,” she adds.

Philip asks members to promote their local St Vincent’s shop through their parish priest by, “encouraging your priest to spread the word.”

Steve explains: “Shops see poverty that members may not know about. If someone needs support, shops can refer them onto members who might befriend them.”

If members get to know their local shop manager there would be lots of scope for working together.

“Shops are part of delivering the SVP mission”, says Helen. “We care about everyone who walks through our doors.”





Collaboration in the community

In any furniture store, handling donations can be a difficult thing to balance. It can often be the case that a request is made for furniture that you don't have, or items are donated that are simply not useful to a family in need.

Having storage facilities is key to striking a balance between accepting donations and being able to supply quality goods on demand. In 1984, SVP Conference members in Leeds acquired the use of the crypt of an Anglican church for furniture storage. This gave the Conference the ability to provide items of furniture when needed by families in need.

As those requiring help grew so did the requirement for space. The breakthrough came when the National Lottery made an award to St Jude's enabling them to purchase the lease on a property in Holbeck.

St Jude's continued to grow, but additional funding was required. The newly formulated Shops Strategy was initiated and Leeds quickly embraced the opportunity to open several Community Shops. St Jude's became the local hub for sorting donated goods, while in return the shops provided the project with the funding it needed. This collaborative effort motivated the Catholic Housing Aid Society (CHAS) in Bradford, to invite the SVP to take over its furniture service. With a larger building 10 miles away in Bradford, some of St Jude's operations moved there, leaving the project with a reduced role and in turn, allowing SVP members to re-engage with St Jude's and better utilise its facilities.

Last November, with the help of SVP Central Council president Marie Atherton, an Open Day was arranged at St Jude's. It opened with Holy Mass celebrated by Father



Ben Griffiths, a regular supporter of the Society. Thirty members, mainly from the Leeds Conferences attended, including Andrew Winfield, a DC President who had managed St Jude's through many of its developments. Young Vincentians from Corpus Christi College helped by greeting members and serving refreshments.

Julie Milner, manager of St Jude's, spoke at the Open Day emphasising the need for quality goods and furniture and explaining that not everything that is donated can be used, for example stained mattresses or furniture that is not fire-safety compliant. Julie also appealed for help in sorting clothing and goods. As well as donations there is also an increasing demand for volunteers to serve customers, sort donations and to look after the shops.

St Jude's had 708 referrals last year, of families whom they were able to help, of which 24 were from SVP Conferences. Adrian Abel, former SVP National President, called for Conferences to use the store to their advantage in assisting local families in need and to encourage more people to donate their unwanted clothes, household articles and furniture.

The Open Day concluded with objectives being set to improve the sustainability of St Jude's, while continuing to work in collaboration with the local community in order to further assist the people who need it most.



If you are interested in volunteering at an SVP shop or project please get in touch at lyndseyb@svp.org.uk. If you would like to make a donation of goods or furniture please get in touch with your local shop. Please note that beds are in particularly high demand. If you would like to request the contact details directly call the National Office on **020 7703 3030**.

Vinnie Camp: an amazing place

Now's the time for Conferences to be planning which local children to send on a summer holiday at one of the SVP's seven Vinnie Camps, but what is it really like at camp and do kids enjoy it? Our special correspondent, 11-year-old Ed Allen from Hornchurch in Essex, reports.

I've been going to the St John Bosco Boys' Camp as a camper for three years now and every year I've completely fallen more in love with it! That's not just because I have to write this and to make the camp look good, but it is actually an amazing place to me.

It has so many fantastic activities: swimming, softball, football, tag rugby, water fights, quizzes, board games, Mass, a play park, hockey, basketball, cricket, races (running in a sack, running backwards, three-legged race, hopping race and long and short distance races) – Bosco's Olympics. When we get to the camp we are put into tent groups with other boys the same age and we are given two helpers, which we call either 'brother' or 'sister' who look after us for the week. We soon get to know each other and become friends.

Every day there are different activities to do and loads of competitions which we can win medals for. We also get free time where we can go swimming, play lots of different sports and games or even just have a lie down, and we can buy something nice from the tuck shop after lunch.

One of the best parts is meals! There are so many choices. For example, for breakfast we have cereal and then we can have sausage, beans, waffles and toast, and there are always seconds and sometime thirds.

On two of the days we go to big swimming pools with one of them having epic slides and wave machines! We have a massive football final, sports day and fishing and canoeing. If you win any activity you and your team will get a prize at the Friday awards evening. You can also win first, second or third for tent inspection and win chocolates and possibly a certificate, like I have before. You can win medals for sport and chocolate for being quiet when going to bed, or you could get the Good



Ed (centre) and chums at Bosco Camp

Camper of the Week award where you get multiple prizes including a mini shield!

Also, one of the best parts is before you go to bed in your tent you get hot chocolate and a biscuit and the brothers and sisters will tell us a story (and if you want, a proper scary one).

The boys come from all over and, though we don't know each other at first, by the end we are friends. Most come on their own or maybe with a brother or a school friend. What I love is that there is always someone to play with that you like. What's good as well is that every year there are some helpers the same and some that are new. The helpers are really good and they are like having a big brother or sister to look after you, but they also let you do your own things too.

I love going to camp – it's my favourite holiday and I want to go until I am 14 and maybe I will become a 'brother' after that. It's awesome!



Other children aged between 7 and 13 years would love to follow in Ed's footsteps at one of the seven Vinnie Camps.

Around 75% of children who attend are sponsored by Conferences. Perhaps your Conference could sponsor some local children – the cost per child ranges between £150 and £300, depending on the chosen camp. For more information visit the SVP website: www.svp.org.uk



University students help rough sleepers

Anthony Bracuti, President of SVP 1833 Universities of Sussex & Brighton and a student, tells us about the resourceful work that the group has been undertaking assisting the homeless in the local community.

At the Universities of Sussex and Brighton, we try to help the rough sleepers of Brighton and Hove. In recent months we've come across a source of free food. The University of Sussex Student's Union shop tends to overstock its lunch meals, and when it has to close for the weekend, it has a surplus that it has to throw away. When that happens, we step in and take as much as we can carry (in fact usually more than we can carry) and distribute it on the Saturday. Normally there is too much for us to give out to rough sleepers directly, so we give the rest to the SVP soup run, the winter night shelters and other homeless charities in the area.

The best part of what we do is the conversations we have with the homeless people we serve, whether it's about their new haircut, their desire to play the most recent video game or occasionally meeting people you've seen on TV before!

One difficulty we have is the humility of the people we minister to. Often, we have to assertively give out

food as they seem more concerned with how much we have left for others on the street, when in reality we often have too much left over. This is perhaps the most moving thing of the whole activity, as it gives us insight into the close-knit communities of the rough sleepers of Brighton. For people who have so little, to be so concerned about everyone else is a lesson that we could all do with.

In a city like Brighton, it's easy to see the number of people living on the streets, and easy to feel powerless to help them; but by demonstrating how we can do simple things, with very little financial cost, to help the people in our society who need it the most, we hope that we can inspire people to bring the love of Christ into the world.

Pictured: Anthony Bracuti (President) and SVP 1833 member Christina Koss. Anthony is a student of Biochemistry at the University of Sussex and Christina Koss is on a short-term placement while studying for a Masters in Cognitive Neuroscience.



Carmel College carol concert

Students of Carmel College in Darlington worked tremendously hard over the festive period to provide gift bags for the SVP Sunday Stop Lunch for the homeless, held on the first Sunday of the month by St Augustine's Conference in Darlington.

In addition the students have been giving their time, as well as gifts, to care homes in the local area. These Young Vincentians of Carmel College took time out of their days to visit care homes in Darlington, and under the support of Andrew Gardiner and the adult SVP, gave a carol

concert and talked with the residents, as well as bringing gifts!

The time they spent visiting was very much enjoyed by all who attended. In addition the students made each resident a Christmas card and prayer card. The students are regularly supported in their work by David Watson, John Kilgour and members of St Augustine's adult Conference and, as we can see, are doing wonderful things under their guidance.



Kindness is the key to hearts: a Vincentian view on young people

Young Vincentian Development Officer (YVDO) Dee Mansi is stepping down after four years. Dee tells YV Programme Manager, Moira Dawe, how her work with young people in schools has been shaped by St Vincent's teachings.

Dee has been a principal in several Catholic primary schools and has fulfilled a number of voluntary positions for Vincentian organisations including the SVP. The Vincentian charism is close to her heart.

Recruited as a YVDO in May 2014 she explains how she thoroughly enjoys sharing with students, staff and parishioners her passion for the work and influence of her hero Vincent de Paul's groundbreaking work for social justice over 400 years ago. As YVDO, Dee worked with schools in Westminster, engaging students with SVP resources, helping teachers set up the apostolates in their school and encouraging close working relationships between schools and their local SVP Conference, parish and the wider Vincentian family.

Dee reflects on some of St Vincent's teachings. "Charity means love, so our hero is the patron saint of love – how wonderful is that? His first mission as parish priest in Chatillon in 1617, was to organise the locals, in confraternities to help each other – much as we work today. Frédéric Ozanam, the SVP's founder, picked up on this aspect, and began creating the SVP as we know it now."

In conclusion, Dee quotes St Vincent who said: "It's not enough to do good, it must be done well". St Vincent



advised, encouraged and instructed the laity and religious how to organise their work in serving the poor and vulnerable on the margins of society. For Dee this is central to our understanding of being a Vincentian. We are "prayer in action" and must always remember that "kindness is the key to hearts". Vincent therefore left us with a template of how to adjust our mission to the needs of those who need our care and love.

If anyone is interested in becoming a YVDO with the Youth Team at SVP, please contact Moira Dawe on MoiraD@svp.org.uk or **0207 703 3030**.

Manchester Mini Vinnies mingle at Mass

Late last year the parish of Our Lady and the English Martyrs in Urmston, Manchester, arranged for a Mass to be said with the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.

The local Mini Vinnies held hands around the church as the sacrament was being administered. Following the Mass refreshments were served to all and the Mini Vinnies mingled with the parishioners. One of the mums made a special Mini Vinnies cake – it not only looked great but parishioners can confirm that it tasted amazing!





Mini Vinnies support sick children

On 20 December 2018 Mini Vinnies of Holy Family Catholic School in Acton, London, visited St Mary's Hospital in Paddington to spread a little cheer.

The Mini Vinnies planned and ran a toy sale earlier in the term and with the money raised they then went online and ordered £150 worth of toys. Each child carefully considered what a child in hospital might want. They then travelled to the children's ward and presented the gifts and a cheque for £326. On returning to school, one of the Year 3 Mini Vinnies told a teacher that this was her "best day ever!"

Staff were very grateful and thanked the Mini Vinnies and everyone that donated toys or bought them at the toy sale. Head teacher Thomas Doherty says: "It has been a real joy to see the Mini Vinnies living out our faith this term and I am so impressed with them. They are the best Mini Vinnie group that I have seen and they continue to lead the school's commitment to the common good. Thank you for all your hard work."

Following the visit the Mini Vinnies received a lovely thank you letter from the hospital:



Thomas (year 3) tells us about the visit from the perspective of a Mini Vinnie:

"We, the Mini Vinnies, went on a trip to help sick children in St Mary's Hospital. We travelled there by tube. First, we travelled to Ealing Broadway then we travelled to Paddington Station. We then walked down a long and curvy road leading to the hospital itself. So, then we walked into the hospital and then met two ladies that work in the hospital. Half of the group went with one nurse and the other half went with the other. We met on the 7th floor. The nurse told us that the children were very sick and will be in hospital on Christmas Day. She said that when they wake up on Christmas morning, the presents will be at the end of their bed. They were very happy and wanted us to say a big thank you to all of you, from them. Then we took a photo next to their Christmas tree. We got certificates and gave our gifts to them. Then we said goodbye but before we went home Mrs Beazer bought us a treat! Then we went back to school."

"Thank you very much for your very kind donations of toys and gifts for children at St Mary's Hospital this Christmas. We were overwhelmed by the response and generosity of your school. The donated gifts are being distributed to children receiving treatment during the festive period and on Christmas Day in stockings on the ends of their beds if they are in-patients."

We truly appreciate your support this Christmas. COSMIC (Children of St Mary's Intensive Care) is a small charity with a wide reach; providing a comprehensive programme of support for the Paddington Intensive Care Unit with funding for state-of-the-art equipment, research into the leading causes of childhood illness, training and education for doctors and nurses as well as emotional, social and practical support, including bereavement and family counselling.

Once again, thank you very much for your support this year – we wouldn't have been able to provide the level of festive cheer to the children and families of the paediatric intensive care unit and further Children's Department without your help."



Hope where there was war: SVP in Sudan and South Sudan

Anita Boniface gives us an insight into the current situation in Sudan and South Sudan, and what the SVP are doing to help.

Imagine your homeland being ravaged by war. Fighting breaks out, violence, crime, lawlessness. You flee your home and travel to a different country in search of safety. In that new country you are not allowed to receive status. You are forced to live and sleep in a makeshift tent, in dry barren conditions, with little food, shelter or clothing. You are scared, tired, your soul has been destroyed.

You keep in your heart the hope that one day you will be able to return to your home and country. This keeps you going, and one day, many years later, it does become possible. You gather together your small amount of belongings and your children and begin to make your way, filled with hope and trepidation, back to your home country. This is what happened to 4 million or so people displaced after decades of civil war in Sudan, when the country was torn apart and became two separate countries: Sudan and South Sudan. Millions of people fled from South Sudan for the north, and were forced to settle in the desert in makeshift tents in Sudan. A strict Sudanese Muslim government ruled the country and many of the children and young people became soldiers and joined the militia as a form of survival.

When it became possible for these displaced people from South Sudan to return to their homes, they must have felt overjoyed. But when they returned they found their farms and houses had been burnt to the ground, the landscape was barren, the infrastructure had been destroyed so that there were no real roads or schools or hospitals and they realised they had left one life of hardship for another.

However, there was hope. The SVP had been active in the whole of unified Sudan from 1939. The country was divided by war from 1953, and in 1986 they set up help centres in the north. Baby feeding clinics still feed more than 10,000 malnourished babies and children every day. Health clinics run by the SVP employ staff and allow local people who cannot travel far to receive

medical support near to the camps where they are living. Medical help is crucial to any community, but particularly where people are packed together in squalid conditions where the care is basic.



When the displaced people living in Sudan returned to the South the SVP saw the need to replicate these projects in South Sudan. They added to this microfinance loans and Vocational Training Centres which allowed people the means to rebuild their lives.

Today, in both Sudan and South Sudan there are hundreds of agriculture projects, like those growing and selling medicinal plants, sewing and tailoring businesses, educational projects, and building and construction businesses being run by South Sudanese people allowing them to support themselves all because of a microloan from the SVP which allowed them the initial money they needed to get started.

The Vocational Training Centres train young men and women. This is essential because women and girls are now more empowered to support their families, ensuring security for her children.

Betram Kuol, director of projects in South Sudan SVP says: "At one Vocational Training Centre women are even training in construction work, proving that old gender stereotypes are being broken down."

There is still a great deal of poverty and the SVP is still running some camps for internally displaced people outside the city of Juba. However, there is hope of a better life.

That better life for millions of Sudanese and South Sudanese people depends on the prayers and donations of members and the public in England and Wales which is twinned with Sudan and South Sudan. If you would like to donate to the projects the SVP runs in both countries, please visit www.svp.org.uk, contact your local Twinnage officer, or telephone 020 7703 3030.

Thank you. Every penny brings hope.



David Wiles and the SVP in India

David Wiles is a member of the National Twinnage Committee, and oversees the Indian Student Sponsorship Scheme. Anita Boniface went to meet him to find out about his links with India and motivation behind his Twinnage work.



“Education is the key to escaping poverty,” David Wiles tells me. We are sitting in his lounge at his home in Whitstable where he lives with his wife Lesley and daughter Paula.

“In India, to escape poverty you either win the lottery or you get educated. Education gives children and the young opportunities in life and hope for the future,” he says.

It is this belief in education that has led David to oversee the Indian Student Sponsorship Scheme that allows people to sponsor a child or young person, either for one year of school study, three years of technical and vocational study or four years to train as a doctor or dentist.

So far the scheme has helped assist thousands of young Indians to escape poverty, support their families, and get a chance in life. The alternative is often for children to drop out of school because of fees and expenses and enter child labour, depriving them not only of an education, but also arguably a childhood. Often families depend on high interest money lenders for finance, which draws them even deeper into poverty.

David works closely with the SVP in India to administer this from his home, and seeks to match sponsors with individual young people where possible.

A retired civil servant, David is a keen administrator with a passion for India. The dawn of his Twinnage vocation was a trip to India with a party of SVP members, when David tells me he was able to reconnect with his roots.

While David calls himself a “Man of Kent” and can trace ancestral roots east of the Medway back 500 years, he says his mother was of Anglo-Indian heritage from Calcutta and he very much feels India is in his blood. He asks me with a smile: “How many people do you know who have a saint buried in their ancestral home?”

His mother grew up in a house in Calcutta which was to be handed over to the Missionaries of Charity in the late 1940s and became the home of Mother Teresa herself. The saint’s body now rests in a tomb below his grandparent’s old apartment, now a chapel. David was born after his parents moved to England in 1950, leaving the house to the nuns.

He feels “blessed” to have been involved in India through Twinnage, and has seen the power and potency of a donation of £15 for a school child, £70 for a technical and vocational student or £120 for a medical student.

“It gives them a life” he says. Medical fees are “extortionate”, so being able to give a student that money allows them to travel to see their families, to buy books, and help pay their living expenses.

Enabling young people to stay in the education system is also very positive for gender equality as girls often “miss out on an education”, David says. “Now girls are able to study. Just think of all the talent the world has lost because girls weren’t and still aren’t receiving an education. It doesn’t bear thinking about.”

David feels that there’s a tremendous potential behind every donation and every child it helps. That’s because “the UK pound can go a long way in India.”

But it isn’t just money that will help young people. David also believes prayer is the foundation, as is the Gospel. “My faith keeps me going when I face obstacles, as we all do. Prayer keeps me strong. And doing my part to help young Indian people put their skills and talents back into their country and into the rest of the world, is my hope.”

Sponsor a child or young person’s education in India

To sponsor a student please complete the application form enclosed in this issue.

Find out more about our work overseas by visiting www.svp.org.uk/twinnage-and-overseas-aid



Hearing from everyday heroes

On Saturday 23 February 2019, the SVP hosted its fourth annual Safeguarding Conference.

With over 100 delegates including Conference members, safeguarding representatives, diocesan safeguarding leads, and district and central council presidents in attendance, it looked to be an eventful day. All presentations and case studies were presented by those involved within the SVP rather than external organisations. As Catherine Kerr, National Safeguarding Manager, phrased it, they are “everyday heroes”.

The morning agenda was filled with discussion on the prison work carried out by some Conferences. The first presentation was led by Ian Kempsell and Tony Blackburne, both founders and members of the SVP Hindley Prison Conference. They focused on life inside and the struggles faced by prisoners. It was truly uplifting to hear how a small donation from the SVP, such as a pair of reading glasses for £1, can make all the difference to how the prisoner spends 23 hours a day in his cell. Strict prison rules and fear of other inmates can leave many prisoners isolated, lonely and depressed, but Ian and Tony explained how talking to someone and sharing their story can make a big difference.

The second presentation was led by Chris Gelder and Ann Oxley, who run Ozanam House and St Christopher's SVP Approved Premises in Newcastle. These SVP bail hostels provide support to those who have left prison and are reintegrating back into normal life.

As Chris explained, while there are over 100 bail hostels around the UK, the SVP hostels provide a more humane and supportive environment than hostels run directly by the prison service. Safeguarding is a topic high on their agenda as they live and work with ex-offenders all day, and need to ensure both their safety and the safety of the guests. This includes guiding them away from falling back into negative habits and helping rehabilitate them back into society.

In the afternoon, presentations and discussions focused on various real-life SVP case studies. The first was recounted by Marie who, with her husband, escorted a gentleman on the sex-offender register to Mass. Discussion focused around the risks that members could encounter in such work and how the risks could be mitigated. The second case study focused on assisting victims of domestic abuse. Gina gave a harrowing account of a woman who turned to the SVP for help in escaping a life of domestic abuse.

The final topic centred on safeguarding when working with the homeless with presentations from two members: Randolph who worked one-on-one with five homeless men and Bill who has run an SVP soup kitchen for the homeless for almost 25 years.

The SVP would like to thank everyone that attended, and for those that weren't able to, all materials are available in the SVP Members & Staff Area of the SVP website. We look forward to seeing as many of you again at the next Safeguarding Conference in 2020.



Love your neighbour means...

Plans are proceeding for Awareness Month 2019



This annual event that takes place every September to coincide with the feast days of St Vincent de Paul and Blessed

Frédéric Ozanam, sets out to raise the profile of SVP Conferences in their parishes and stop the Society being, in the words of the Catholic Herald, “the Catholic Church’s best kept secret”.

What's in store for this year's Awareness Month? Although it's still early days, the SVP's National Communications Manager, Kieran Knights, gave Vincentian Concern a sneak preview of the plans.

"Jesus told us to love God and love your neighbour and that's really at the core of why we in the SVP do what we do," Kieran says. "So loving your neighbour will be the theme of this year's campaign."

There'll be a series of six posters each exploring different aspects of the Society's work under the heading of "Love your neighbour means..."

So love your neighbour means befriending the lonely or helping the homeless, for example, or feeding the hungry. And each example will be illustrated with a real member who's active in each area of work.

As well as posters there'll also be copy for parish bulletins, a selection of lectern addresses and other resources plus, this year for the first time, a series of videos of members explaining what they do. Look out for your Awareness Month resources pack in late June but first, about a month earlier, there'll be a special Awareness Month publication explaining the whole campaign.

"Why not talk to your parish priests now about putting Awareness Month activity in the diary for September," Kieran adds. "It'll be a great opportunity to attract more members, raise funds and boost the profile of the SVP in your parish."

Awaken your inner baker

Everybody enjoys delicious tasty treats with a good warm drink don't they? Every year we encourage our SVP Members to create their own Coffee Morning to raise funds for the Young Vincentian's programme and children's Vinnie Camps on or around the 23 April, the anniversary of the birth of Frédéric Ozanam.

The SVP Young Vincentians programme encourages young people to develop their faith and begin a life of service to others, while our children's Vinnie Camps provide respite and encouragement to children aged between 8 and 13 who might be facing difficult or challenging circumstances.

During the camps they do lots of activities such as swimming, climbing, talent shows, football, arts and crafts and dancing. It gives the children an enjoyable break while creating wonderful memories.

And remember that children who join the various branches of the Young Vincentians or who holiday at Vinnie Camps are potential adult SVP members of tomorrow.

The Coffee Morning is a great opportunity to meet parishioners and people from your local area by sharing beautiful moments together while raising funds for children in need. But most importantly, you'll be contributing to the SVP by sharing a cup of coffee.



National Office will be hosting its own Coffee Morning too, when all the staff will be encouraged to bake delightful cakes. Any members in the south London area are welcome to come along.

Awaken your inner baker and cook some yummy homemade treats (or go to your local bakery) and spread the word!

Let your compassion live on

St Vincent de Paul's Legacy

Our patron, St Vincent de Paul, was an extraordinary man whose passion and dedication to improving the human condition led to the foundation of our Society and the basis of our mission to help individuals and families in need; giving them hope, dignity, well-being and peace of mind.

St Vincent's legacy of love and care has found its way to almost every corner of the world. As Vincentians, we have many opportunities to leave our own legacy through our service as SVP members and supporters.

Raymond's Legacy

In 2013, long standing SVP supporter, Raymond Robinson, sadly passed away. He was a strong advocate for our work and was touched by the spirit of charity exemplified by St Vincent de Paul. Raymond wanted to leave a similar legacy of compassion and decided to leave a gift in his will to his local SVP Conference so his service to the poor could continue.

His gift contributed greatly to improving the lives of many in the local area, particularly a young man named Ibrahim.

Ibrahim lives with his mother and three sisters. Despite wanting to live an ordinary adult life, he was always dependent on his family for even his most basic needs, as he suffers from a rare eye disorder that left him almost sightless. Unable to take care of himself, Ibrahim felt that he had lost his sense of dignity and there was a great deal of financial and emotional strain on the family.



Ibrahim

Your Catholic Legacy

The SVP is a member of Your Catholic Legacy (YCL), a group of 27 Catholic charities working together to raise awareness of the importance of leaving a gift to Catholic causes in our wills. Together, we recently launched the 'Share your Saint' campaign. You are invited to be part of this by sharing the saint whose legacy has given you the most inspiration and why. Please visit www.yourcatholiclegacy.org.uk/share-your-saint to share your story across the world. A YCL leaflet is included in this issue and contains more information.

As you consider your saint, please take a moment to think about what you hope to leave as your own legacy. There are countless ways to make a difference. Many people, like Raymond, choose to leave a gift to a charitable cause in their will. Such a gift ensures your compassion lives on and gives hope to many people in need or experiencing difficulties. If you would like your compassion to live on why not take advantage of our free will-writing service. This is available to SVP members on a first come, first served basis from 15 April until 30 September or until funds available are exhausted. Through this service you can have a simple single or mirror will written free of charge by a participating solicitor in your area, with no obligation to leave a gift to the SVP or other organisation.

Using Raymond's legacy, SVP Conference members were able to give Ibrahim the life he dreamed of. They provided funding towards enlarging the family home, giving Ibrahim his own space, complete with an en-suite bathroom and a talking microwave so he can both wash and cook independently. The family were very thankful for Raymond's gift and endeavoured to learn more about the great Saint who had inspired him.

If you wish to register for our free will-writing service or need information about the 'Share Your Saint Campaign' please contact Fundraising Officer, Aisha McCarthy, at the National Office on aisham@svp.org.uk



Behind the scenes at National Office



The new Young Vincentians

We introduce you to the all-new Youth Department at SVP National Office and hear about plans for the continued growth and development of the Young Vincentians.

A brand new team has been appointed in the SVP Youth Department following the departure of Claz Gomez for pastures new. Heading up the team is Moira Dawe, Young Vincentians Programme Manager, who is responsible for the strategic and operational development of the department.

She is joined by Alec Jewell, Mini Vinnies Officer, Dave Hill, Regional Events and National Volunteer Officer, Teresa Kehoe, SVP 1833 Research and Development officer, and Mary Arayo, Administrative Assistant.

"Our youth work developed greatly under the leadership of Claz Gomez," says Moira. "We thank Claz for her careful, spiritual and charitable development of what is now termed Young Vincentians. It has blossomed into four distinct apostolates which continue to grow and develop day by day: the Mini Vinnies, Youth SVP, B-Attitude and SVP 1833."

She adds: "The new Young Vincentians team are very excited at further developing our ministry with the four Youth Apostolates in the service of God, His Church and most especially the most disadvantaged in society."

Mary, the newest member of the youth team started in January in the role of Young Vincentians administrative assistant. She has been secretary of her local SVP Conference since its inception in 2015 and has been a catechist and Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion in her parish for over five years, and is looking forward to

working with the team and enabling the officers, schools and parishes to spread Vincentian spirituality.

Alec comes from a background in Catholic youth ministry having spent a year working at Alton Castle, a retreat centre for 9 to 11 year olds in the Archdiocese of Birmingham. Alec currently oversees the Mini Vinnies programme nationally and has been developing all sorts of projects for the programme including introducing Mini Vinnies in parishes – currently being piloted in four locations.

Alec says he hopes to see all those involved in Mini Vinnies at Westminster Cathedral for the Mini Vinnies Mass on the 11 June 2019. "Consider yourselves most warmly invited," he declares.

Dave, too, has a background in Catholic youth ministry. He led the youth ministry in Portsmouth diocese for many years and has also been a secondary school teacher and taught in special needs schools for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties.

Dave says he will be contacting all Young Vincentian Development Officers (YVDOs) to arrange training in B-Attitude Life, the new web app for 14 to 18 year olds, and helping groups to learn how to integrate this resource into youth meetings, whether in a school or parish setting.

Teresa Kehoe has worked in Catholic Youth Ministry as a parish youth leader. She's a trustee of the Kenelm Youth

Trust and a course director and lecturer in Catholic youth ministry. She worked on developing B-Attitude Life and has used the app with her own youth groups in the Midlands.

Teresa is now researching SVP 1833 groups with a view to developing a new model for parishes and universities, supporting young adults so they can live out their Vincentian charism in its fullness.

Teresa says she has been struck by the enthusiasm shown by these young adults in their desire to serve the Lord and serve others as part of the Vincentian family. She is currently liaising with Franciscan University in Steubenville, Ohio, to arrange for SVP England and Wales to have a specially-developed formation programme for the use of its young adults.

Moira Dawe, the team's leader, also has an educational and youth ministry background. She has taught extensively in secondary schools in Northern Ireland and England, teaching modern languages, RE and careers education to pupils of all ages and abilities, as well as supporting pupils pastorally as form tutor for all year groups.

Moira has extensive knowledge and experience of special needs education having worked for several years for the local authority in Kent, liaising with head teachers and Special Education Needs Coordinators in schools across the county to develop whole school and individual special needs provision. She has also served as a school governor as well as a youth group leader in several parishes.

Moira says: "It gives me great pleasure to report on some of our key priorities as a Youth Team going forward. I have recently developed our five year Young Vincentians strategic plan in consultation with our very proactive and supportive Youth Committee, chaired by Trustee, Michael Willcock. This fits in with the SVP's overall five-year strategic plan as well as its mission and aims."

She explains: "It is an exciting time with lots of key developments to come. We will keep members updated on our progress through our website and e-newsletters. I'd like to thank all members for their support of the Young Vincentians team and we look forward to working in partnership with them as we set out to achieve our key strategic aims over the next five years and beyond."

Finally Moira concludes with an appeal: "Please pray for our youth, for our Young Vincentians team and those we serve – we rely on God's grace."



Some of the youth team's key priorities are:

- **Grow and extend all four of the youth apostolates** across England and Wales
- **Empower, support and value** the YVDOs and develop a YVDO recruitment and retention strategy
- **Develop the youth social media strategy** to find more effective ways to engage young people through increased social media use
- **Continue to build effective working relationships** with a range of internal and external stakeholders to support the work of the Young Vincentians team at National Office
- **Build and launch a Young Vincentians microsite** as an adjunct to the main SVP website, so as to extend reach and encourage schools, parishes, universities and colleges to set up new groups
- **Develop life-long Vincentians and support young people** to grow spiritually in their love of Christ and neighbour, reaching out to those in any kind of need or on the margins of society
- **Develop the Youth Twinnage strategy** in consultation with Trustees and the Twinnage committee
- **Promote the B-Attitude web app** and gather feedback from our users
- **Relaunch SVP 1833** in autumn 2019
- **Develop appropriate child and young person safeguarding processes and procedures** in liaison with the SVP's safeguarding manager
- **Roll out Mini Vinnies** to parishes across England and Wales

If you use social media visit us –
we'd love to see you!

YoungVincentiansEW **YoungVinniesEW**



CEO's Message

Hope and promise



As I write this article I am on a train bound for Manchester to visit some properties that may lead to a new SVP project. Easter is just around the corner and it is a fitting time to be looking to the future and new beginnings.

The Society has endured since its foundation in 1833 both by staying true to its core work of person-to-person befriending, and by constantly innovating and renewing the range of services it provides for the marginalised and disadvantaged.

2019 will be no exception to this. This week the Society opened a new superstore at Rees way in Bradford. In the coming month we will be opening another two community shops, in Wrexham and Bangor. While in East Anglia, refurbishment work is currently underway at our newest property in Sheringham, ready for the opening of our first HMO (House of Multiple Occupancy) in September.

There is new life for our existing projects too as St Vincent's Support Centre in Leeds is celebrating a new National Lottery Community Fund grant of over £300,000 for three years, which will ensure that this wonderful project will continue to deliver excellent services to those in the local community. The latest innovation in this flagship project is planned to be an occupational therapist.

At the board meeting last week it was agreed to relaunch a new look SVP 1833 in September, targeting young adults both in tertiary education and those outside of education. More information on this will follow in our summer edition.

All of this Vincentian work, brimming with hope and promise, is due to the hard work of members and staff. We are indeed an Easter People, filled with the hope and promise of the resurrection, developing and shaping the Society to bring this hope to those who need it most.

Wishing you all a Holy and Happy Easter.

Elizabeth Palmer and all at National Office

Remembering those we have lost

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

Rene Brandon: Founding member of the St Agnes, West Kirby Conference, Rene was one of the first women members of her Conference and a long serving member of the Union of Catholic Mothers. She was a valued member who will be missed.

John Gallivan: A member of SS Peter and Paul, Wakefield. May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

Peter Gee: A long standing member and former president of Sacred Heart, Hemsworth and St Joseph, Morothorpe. At the time of his death Jim was also the VP of the same Conference. May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

Ellen Logue: A kind-hearted, committed and active member of Christ the King Conference in Bedford. She will be greatly missed.

Thyra Martin: A prayerful member of Our Lady of All Nations Conference, Camborne-Redruth. Thyra died on 28th February. May she rest in peace.

Tom Murtagh: Tom was a long serving and devoted member of St Vincent de Paul Conference, Knutsford, from 1986 until 2016. He died on 23rd September 2018 aged 95. May he rest in peace.

Jim Shine: A long standing member of St Agnes West Kirby, Jim began his journey with the SVP with his wife Rose, who started a Conference in a ballroom in West Kirby. Jim went along to help and was hooked ever since.

Theresa Shuttleworth: Secretary of St Jeanne Jugan Conference in Leeds North West District Council, and Leeds Central Council. May she rest in peace.

Aidan Smith: A long standing member of the St Charles Borromeo Conference in Grange-over-Sands, Aidan was president until shortly before his death. Aidan was an important member of the community and a true gentleman who will be sadly missed.

Sr Ann Tighe: A Sister of the Daughters of the Holy Spirit, who worked for many years in Nigeria. Sr Anne was an active member and spiritual director of Christ the King Conference in Bedford. A wise and calm presence, she will be greatly missed.

Anthony Robert Warburton (Tony): Tony joined the All Hallows SVP Conference in Miskin Cardiff in 1999, and after a few years became Conference President. Tony showed a true Vincentian spirit for the people he met and he will be greatly missed by his family, his SVP brothers and sisters and all who knew him.

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

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

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

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.



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

info@stscholasticas.co.uk

Registered Charity: 203583



2019 Dates for the diary

Board Meetings

Friday 10 May

National Office, London

Monday 15 July

Holy Island

Tuesday 16 July

Blackfriars, Newcastle

Friday 20 & Saturday 21 September

Hinsley Hall, Leeds

Friday 22 November

Hinsley Hall, Leeds

National Council Meetings

Saturday 11 May

National Office, London

Friday 22 & Saturday 23 November

Hinsley Hall, Leeds

National Meeting

Friday 21 & Saturday 22 June

Loughborough University

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.

About the SVP



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

The Society is a lay organisation initially formed in Paris in 1833 by Blessed Frédéric Ozanam and his companions, and active in England and Wales since 1844. Placed under the Patronage of St Vincent de Paul, it is inspired by his thinking and works. It seeks, in the spirit of justice and charity, to help those who are suffering the effects of poverty in whatever form. Works include visiting the lonely, soup runs, 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 the people we seek to help, SVP members develop lasting relationships with the people they serve, and gain a rare insight into the lives of who they help.

Editorial Policy



St Vincent de Paul Society

England and Wales

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

Share your stories

The next deadline to submit content for the Vincentian Concern is **20 June 2019**. Articles for inclusion in the magazine should be emailed to Rachael Crookes at rachaelc@svp.org.uk. Please include a high resolution image with your article.

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