

Vincentian Concern

St. Vincent de Paul Society (England and Wales)

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YOU
DON'T
KNOW
ANN...



LONELINESS
WELCOME THE STRANGER



Love of money is the source of all evil



Pope Francis recalled that a wise old priest told him that when a religious community becomes too attached to money, God usually sends a disastrous treasurer - "it's a blessing." His comments came after hearing about the work being done by Sr Yaileny Ponce Torres DC, who works at a Cuban government-run home for people with severe disabilities.

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I am not suggesting we appoint "disastrous" treasurers, especially not at National level, but as I near the end of my term, I recognise the damage done by Conferences having too high a bank balance. Good treasurers are not measured by the size of their bank balances. Ironically, I have also been disappointed by Conferences believing they can give "spare" money to causes in which they are not involved.

The three-fold Vincentian ethos is clear: making ourselves personally available to those suffering poverty, developing our spiritual life as individuals and Conferences, and growing together in fellowship, empowering us to achieve far more than the sum of our parts.

The International Rule (1.2) describes members' Vincentian Vocation as "...to follow Christ through service to those in need and to bear witness to His compassionate and liberating love, showing their commitment through person-to-person contact. Vincentians serve in hope." We also need to "recognise the importance of the personal relationship with those in poverty, giving priority to the poorest of the poor" (Rule 1.6).

Many wonderful organisations do great work in our communities, but in joining the Society, we commit ourselves to this face-to-face meeting with those in need. This applies to us all. Yet sadly, money can actually get in our way. This is nothing new. St Vincent scolded some members of the Ladies of Charity, an organisation he had founded in 1617, for sending their maidservants to bring aid to the poor, emphasising it was in giving themselves that they truly serve Christ. Similarly, Emmanuel Bailly, Blessed Frédéric's mentor and first International President, told a member who wanted to give money to another charitable purpose, "it should not be, as it would depart from the intention of the donor and cramp the works we have adopted. By aiming at everything, we finish up doing nothing."

Our auditors have warned us that we are accumulating excessive funds contrary to Charity rules, not at the National level, but at local levels. Conferences with excessive funds have therefore been contacted and asked to formulate plans to use these funds. Most have given the matter some thought and in many cases come up with innovative solutions. A few have point blank refused to consider spending anything outside their parish and others prefer giving the money to other organisations which the Trustees have to reject as being outside our Rule and legal statutes. Meanwhile the Society needs £320,000 for roof repairs at our Tyne residential projects; in Bradford, we are making experienced housing advice workers redundant, following cuts from a housing provider in the city, and the expansion of our Youth projects is a significant investment.

As a guide treasurers should retain between 3 and 6 months reserves, although I appreciate that circumstances vary during the year, with Christmas and holiday times requiring more funds. But trust in the Lord, use your funds prudently, and don't be afraid to be innovative or help poorer Conferences. Remember if necessary we can always use our structure and request grants from our DC (or even CC) to help us when our funds are insufficient for our needs.

So beware or God will send us a disastrous treasurer!

Adrian Abel, National President

Keep in touch with us:

SVPenglandandwales

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Scan to visit our website or go to:
www.svp.org.uk



The Vincentian way - A way of gentleness

For more than four years now, civil war has raged in Syria. As the destruction, mayhem and slaughter continues, terrified people in sad streams eventually leave their long-loved homes with only what they can carry, and set out by land and by sea in hope of a new life.

Sadly this is a picture repeated over and over: Iraq, Afghanistan, Central America, South Sudan, Cambodia, Vietnam, Angola, Nigeria - and many more places. Most of these countries are distant from us, but Governments from around the world joined these conflicts on one side or the other (often having started them), bringing with them the newest and most effective means of killing and destruction.

These bloody conflicts have not always been in faraway places. In 1830 while Frédéric Ozanam was a university student in Lyon, France was recovering from over thirty years of slaughter, and war induced hunger and misery. Ozanam was greatly concerned, but what to do? One idea came from nearby, from the Rue de Bac, where in November 1830 Mary the Mother of Tenderness appeared to a young novice of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, and gave to Catherine Laboure a challenge to help change how people thought. A growing army of consecrated women appeared in the streets of Paris and other towns and cities, armed with baskets of bread, pots of soup, and bags of clothes.

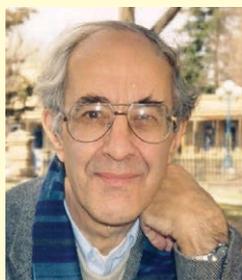
They showed people new ways of thinking and behaving. Suspicion, violence, hate and killing were to give way to gentleness, forgiveness, care and loving service.

The Miraculous Medal was given to Catherine Laboure, given to the entire Vincentian Family, as Mary would have us learn from her divine Son, who came not to be served but to serve and give his life for many. This is the Vincentian Way – a way of gentleness and service. When you are visiting people suffering the effects of poverty and exclusion, when so often you can see no way to really end their plight, have you thought to offer them a Miraculous Medal? This is no “good luck” charm. It is a reminder that we are not alone in reaching out to others, God is with us, God’s Mother is looking after us, and she can shower blessings on those you care for.



Paul C Roche CM.

Fundraising: A form of ministry?



When we feel blessed, for example by good health, somewhere nice to live, a loving relationship, the gift of children or grandchildren, or long-standing close friendships, we naturally want to bless others and take pleasure from sharing our abundance with them.

No matter what material wealth we possess, we all have in us a natural desire to share our abundance with others because through our sharing we demonstrate our gratitude for all we’ve been given, and when we see the fruits of our sharing, we feel blessed all over again.

As we endeavour to follow in the footsteps of St Vincent de Paul and Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, we want to bless those for whom we feel compassion and we yearn to see them healed, restored and helped to flourish.

Raising funds for this mission is not therefore a process of “asking for money” but an invitation, an opportunity to be part of something amazing that will transform lives - not only the life of the one who is enriched by the gift, but the one who is blessed and enriched through their act of giving.

In “A spirituality of Fundraising” the late Henri Nouwen (pictured left) describes fundraising as a form of ministry. “It is a way of announcing our vision and inviting other people into our mission. Vision and mission are so central to the life of God’s people that without vision we perish, and without mission we lose our way. Vision brings together needs and resources to meet those needs. It also shows us new directions and opportunities for our mission. Vision gives us courage to speak when we might want to remain silent. Fundraising is proclaiming what we believe in such a way that we offer other people an opportunity to participate with us in our vision and mission.”

Ken Madine, Head of Fundraising, Communications and Marketing



Conference Spotlight

Our New Neighbours

Helping & Supporting Asylum Seekers

Asylum seekers are amongst the most vulnerable people in Britain. Often fleeing persecution and war in their home countries, sometimes trafficked to the UK, their lives are filled with fear, insecurity and uncertainty.

An SVP Conference in Burnley near Manchester has become heavily involved in supporting Asylum Seekers as part of an ecumenical project called Building Bridges.

Cynthia and Michael Hewitt, two Conference members from St John the Baptist Burnley, explain that the asylum seeker support offered by the Conference centres around a Tuesday afternoon Drop In centre hosted at their local church which was first set up by both Christians and Muslims to help build interfaith relationships in the area.

Around 20-30 asylum seekers come to the sessions each week. Together with members from 5 other local church groups of different denominations, the SVP members help with English Language teaching, provide food and drinks, and play with and care for the little children.

When the asylum seekers (known by the group as 'New Neighbours') first arrive at the drop in centre, SVP members ask them for their date of birth, help register them with a doctor and dentist and accompany them to these appointments. They provide support ranging from celebrating birthdays to helping them find a solicitor. They also provide welcome packs which include everything from cutlery to bedding, and enable them to settle into their hostel or home a little more comfortably than they would otherwise do.

Michael explains that the Asylum seekers they help come from dreadful situations in countries which include Iraq, Iran, Congo, India, Pakistan and Ghana and have endured war, terror, persecution and trafficking. Because they come without visas, and usually without passports, they are classed as 'illegal immigrants' until they can convince the UK authorities that their case warrants that they receive refugee status. Michael and Cynthia have accompanied New Neighbours to the Home Office in Liverpool where asylum seekers face lengthy interviews of up to six hours.

"The interviews can be very traumatic" says Cynthia. Not only do they cover some of the trauma which a person may have gone through, they also have the terrible pressure of being a deciding



factor in whether a person is sent back to that place of trauma, torture and killing.

While they are in the UK and their case is being examined, they will be placed in a hostel, and eventually moved to houses. It can take several years for an Asylum Seeker to be granted refugee status. They usually have no money, and Michael explains that most come with just a carrier bag containing all of their possessions.

While their hostel or house is paid for, they are given no more than £7 a week for living expenses and cannot afford basic necessities and are dependent on charities and churches for donations of food and clothes. The SVP gathers donations such as these from generous members of the church and community, and Michael and Cynthia store these in their home. At the centre, the donations are placed on tables and the New Neighbours are invited to take what they need. This method of choosing ensures their dignity is respected.

Cynthia says:

“ Helping Asylum Seekers has totally changed our lives for the better and we feel more fulfilled. We have made lots of loyal friends and it has changed our attitude to refugees and asylum seekers. ”

Michael says: "If we wanted, Cynthia and I would never have to buy any food ever again because our New Neighbours would feed us, even just on their £7 a week. They are so generous, and we have made so many good friends. We risk losing those friendships if they are deported".

To seek and find those who are forgotten!

A Conference in the North East of England which wishes to remain anonymous has in recent years begun taking on referrals to support young single mums in their community.

The Conference President writes:

“Our parish primary school catchment area serves several affluent suburban villages as well as the immediate surrounding area which consists of a mixture of housing. Homes which are owner occupied, privately rented, Council rented and housing association rented can all be found within walking distance of the school and people living in the area are from varied walks of life.

The school acknowledges that sometimes the best way to ensure that each child achieves his or her full potential is to find support for their parents. In recent years the school has helped our Conference to identify families who would benefit from a little help with the additional costs of feeding and entertaining children during school holidays. The relationship between the school staff and the parents is crucial to their acceptance of our help.

We have amazingly generous parishioners who provide us with enough funds to be able to give each family a supermarket voucher worth £10 for each child at half term, and £20 for Christmas and summer holidays.

We have always hand delivered these ‘grants’ in order to introduce ourselves and try to identify any further needs the family may have. The majority of these families are headed up by young single Mums who feel judged by society and are reluctant to seek help, particularly from perceived strangers. We can keep a friendly eye on any family that attends Mass, developing friendship and trust with them through weekly conversations, but what about the many who do not attend Mass?

We decided to buy a ‘Pay as you go’ mobile phone specifically for our Conference. Now when we call we can leave a contact phone number for help if a ‘crisis’ hits. Our first text was a heartfelt thank you from one Mum. School staff and our Parish Priest also use the SVP mobile number as a means of referral.

Young Mums get lonely as much as the elderly so befriending is still our major support but families have additional needs. Our Conference has received training from our local Foodbank so that we can issue vouchers as the need arises.

As a young Mum is relocated into our area her family will often need items such as beds, bedding, white goods and flooring for which Council grants are no longer available.



In the financial year 2015-2016 our parishioners, with donations from our District and Central Councils, provided more than £7,000 worth of material assistance to families in need.

In addition our Conference has successfully applied for grants from the Young Mums and Children Fund and David Young’s Charity. Some needs can be met through a ‘one off’ purchase but families also have recurring needs, for example Primary aged children quickly outgrow shoes and clothing. As the weather turned colder, one of our older parishioners donated their “winter fuel allowance” This provided warm boots and coats for the children in one of these families.

Of course young children outgrow their clothes before they wear them out. Several of the Mums have created a way in which they can repay the Society. Through befriending conversations, several of our young Mums heard about the SVP Community shop and donated clothes, toys and games to be sold there. As one said to me “These were given to me and I shouldn’t sell them on. I’d really like them to go to the SVP to help others.” Another told me “I never used to believe in someone up above but with all the help I’ve had from total strangers I’m beginning to believe there must be!”



Community Support Projects

SVP Hosts Crisis at Christmas for £1



SVP Head of North East Sue Walker writes: **“For the second successive year, the SVP hosted Newcastle’s Crisis at Christmas event for homeless people at its Blackfriars Community Centre. Local homeless or vulnerably housed people were invited to enjoy free food and entertainment throughout Christmas Day and Boxing Day.**

Last year, Crisis approached the Society because it had lost its traditional venue for holding the event and was looking for a new one. The SVP was only too pleased to help, as the event fits closely with the Society’s ethos of reaching out to those in need in the local community.

SVP Regional Manager, Sue Walker, said, “We were delighted to be able to effectively donate our premises to Crisis over this period and to be able to contribute to making so many people’s Christmas brighter and less lonely.”

Crisis took over the venue on Christmas Eve and a team of 20 volunteers spent the day setting up for the following two days. Over Christmas and Boxing Day more than 280 people attended the event each day. During the period, 570 hot meals were served, 1921 items of clothing were given out and 708 gifts were given. Visitors were provided with entertainment, such as a circus cabaret act, bingo and singing. They also had the opportunity to get a haircut, see the podiatrist or masseuse and access healthcare services with volunteer dentists and doctors running drop-in services.

Quotes from Crisis staff included, “The venue made Christmas brilliant. It reduced risk, was easy to manage and gave a far better guest experience”.

“Bob (Centre Manager) is marvellous, all of the staff were unfailingly hospitable, accommodating and brilliant”.

A number of residents from the SVP’s next door homeless hostel attended the event and all really enjoyed themselves. One got herself a new wardrobe of clothes and another spent the day volunteering, helping to give out food parcels to other guests. We look forward to having Crisis back again next year - the dates are already booked!”

Llandudno Shop Opens!

I am really pleased to announce the opening of the latest community shop for the Northwest Region.

The shop opened on a “balmy” evening in December, situated in busy Mostyn Street, Llandudno. Its initial opening was supported with a special members evening and blessing on 8th December where Ian Mawdsely, CC President and local SVP members visited the shop out of hours and were very impressed with both its size and the quality of goods on offer.

Unbeknown to us, the shop manager we recruited was an old friend of Ian’s so they were thrilled when they bumped into each other over the counter! The shop quickly developed that community feel we aspire to, as new shop manager Bethan and her assistant Tina, have both brought (some may say press ganged) many volunteers, friends and family into helping with both set up and day to day running.

The shop had an official opening ceremony on 5th January.



The opening was supported by Welsh Assembly Member, Janet Finch Saunders and Mayor Cllr Carol Marubbi and again they were positive about the look and feel of the shop, as well as the impact it will have on the local community. While many see Llandudno as a “well to do” town, there are still people in need and working with the local members gives us the chance to sign post that. Plus the Welsh rock shop is next door!

Bev Whittaker, Head of Northwest Region

SVP to Launch 'Holistic Activity' Project for Older People



As part of the new service SVP is looking to recruit 40 new volunteers to support 200 older people and 100 carers and their families across Brighton.

If you would like further information or to get involved please contact Thomas Gillespie, Regional Head of South East England SVP at thomasg@svp.org.uk or call 0207 703 3030.

A brand new SVP programme to reduce isolation amongst older people, enhancing their health and quality of life is being rolled out in Brighton.

The programme, which has been named Embrace, is a collaborative pilot project between CSAN (Caritas Social Action Network), Caritas Salford, Fr Hudson's Society, Catholic Care and SVP. The programme will operate over 2 years in a selected deanery in four different regions - Brighton, Birmingham, Leeds and Salford.

While volunteers will be recruited from both Christian and non-Christian backgrounds, to help people of all faiths and none, churches within the deaneries will form the bases in which activities for older people take place. Local parishioners will help formulate and run the activities with the guidance and support of a paid local development worker. Thomas Gillespie, Regional Head of South East England at the SVP, says: "We hope Embrace will help strengthen local communities and engage with as many older isolated people as possible. Activities will be designed to enhance quality of life for older people while reducing the loneliness that is so often prevalent amongst this group."

The result of the two-year pilot will include a practical tool kit of guidance for parishes to use in future to launch their own Embrace programmes.

The Changing Landscape of Advice at CHAS @ St Vincent's in Bradford

In January 2017 a new contract to deliver Welfare Advice to residents of Bradford South came into being; after winning our bid in August 2016 for the new contract and much planning and preparation the new service opened with a dedicated telephone advice line available for residents of Bradford South to access a range of welfare advice services.

Bradford Metropolitan District Council have radically changed the landscape for advice delivery across the district and the new contract calls for more access to on-line resources and self-help routes for clients but with outreach venues still available across the district where clients can have a face to face appointment where appropriate. These changes to CHAS advice service in Bradford have resulted in a number of staff transferring to the SVP from other organisations and have unfortunately resulted in some redundancies. CHAS @ St Vincent's continues to deliver support services from the premises in Otley Road to those in need, these services include General support service, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classes, immigration drop-in, job club, low cost furniture and household goods, as well as food parcels and fuel top-ups for Bradford residents. The funding landscape remains challenging for the organisation to maintain sustainability, with contracts playing a key role in maintaining the SVP's services.





SVP B-Attitude Training Programme



IT IS NO SECRET THAT THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL WAS FOUNDED BY YOUNG PEOPLE. UNIVERSITY STUDENTS TO BE EXACT. BUT THEY COULDN'T DO IT WITHOUT THEIR NON-STUDENT MENTOR: EMMANUEL BAILLY.

As the first President General, this is what he had to say: "The Society of St. Vincent de Paul was started by youth and is setup for the youth. Therefore its action holds for us a special virtue. A large part of the affection that the public grant the Society comes from the fact that they believe it to be largely made up of young people. For this reason, it is necessary to continue to find young members, be they from schools or other areas. It is essential for us that young people receive preferential treatment within the body and that they appear on the frontline."

4. Be kind! Be brave! Be strong!

FORTITUDE

EMPATHY, PERSEVERANCE
COMPASSION, COURAGE.

"I can do all things in Him Who strengthens me"
~ Phil 4:13, RSVCE

"We pray for FORTITUDE to persevere, not to give up"
~ St. Vincent de Paul, Vincentian Rule, 17, commentary

Learn 1 2 3 4

Vinnies CEO Sleepout 2011 - Rise to the Challenge

It takes a lot of courage (fortitude) to step into someone else's world - especially the world as Vincentians. The video shows how some Vincentians in Australia exhibited a great fortitude to sleep on the streets in order to understand, albeit very marginally, what it those they served.

Back Next

Live 1 2 3

How courageous are you?

Tick the TRUE box if something is true for you. Tick FALSE if it is not true for you. Tick 'I don't know' if you think you may be confusing the way you do react to something by the way you want to do something.

Question 1 / 14:
I do the right thing, even if it is difficult.

- True
- False
- I don't know

Love 1 2 3

Make a DIFFERENCE!

In your SVP B-Attitudes group split into groups of no more than 3 members if possible. Pray as a group the following prayer so that the Holy Spirit can guide you in your choices:

Heavenly Father, help us to grow in Fortitude. May we follow the example of Jesus Christ your Son. Help us to see Him in each person we encounter; challenging injustice, serving the lonely and making You known to them through our works of charity and through talking about you.

Holy Spirit, empower us to live true fortitude in our lives today.

Lead us to make choices in life that give preference to serve and love God and our neighbours.

Amen

With our 7-11 year olds (Mini Vinnies) beginning to learn the little way of selfless love and altruism, and Youth SVP, our 11-14 year olds beginning to venture out into helping not just their immediate neighbour but their local communities as well, we have devised a programme to equip and form our SVP B-Attitude teens (14-18 year olds) in areas of self-management and leadership... all in the Vincentian spirit. Following on from the previous edition of Vincentian Concern, we continue to show you exactly what we've been up to, in helping our teens come to the fullness of their Vincentian Vocations!

Not only is the programme going to be helpful in Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education classes at schools, but it's going to be helpful in parish settings - particularly for post-Confirmation groups. With the potential to be expanded both nationally and internationally, teens are encouraged through this online training programme to live a life of the Beatitudes. The official launch will take place on the feast of St. Vincent de Paul this September. So it is a work in progress until then... but currently Module 1 is available to the general public all over the world.

LIFE SKILLS TRAINING GUIDE - MODULE 2		
Leadership Development: A Servant Heart	OBJECTIVES	LIFE SKILL
1. Follow the Leader	Christian Leadership	Self Improvement
2. Show me	'Network of Charity'	Time Management
3. After you	The President	Delegation
4. Don't Stress	The Secretary	Organisation
5. Sow and Grow	The Treasurer	Practical Money
6. Tell me about it	The Communicator	Professional Communication
7. Love it, Live it, Learn it	Teamwork	Emotional Intelligence

Attitude is Finally Here!



This spiritual resource comes as part of our B-Attitude apostolate, and seeks to equip young people with transferable life skills as they serve the marginalised, vulnerable and disadvantaged of society in their charitable works more confidently, whilst growing in their Catholic faith. Initially, it will contain 5 modules: Personal Development, Leadership Development, Creative Development, Catholic Social Action & Faith Development. The fruits of the programme should include growing in faith, and actively transforming lives and reducing material, social and spiritual poverty in our society. It encompasses all that Catholic Social Teaching inspires us to do.

STRUCTURE				
Module 1 Personal Development	Module 2 Leadership Development	Module 3 Creative Development	Module 4 Catholic Social Action	Module 5 Vincentian Lifestyle (TBC)
Wisdom	Christian Leadership	Written Word	CST	Creed
Understanding	'Network of Charity'	Visual Arts	Making a Difference	S.T.M.
Counsel	The President	Music	Political concern action	Virtue, Faith, Hope Charity
Fortitude	The Secretary	Sports	Local Issues	Beatitudes
Knowledge	The Treasurer	Technology	Material poverty	Church
Piety	The Communicator	New Media	Social Poverty	St. VdP & Bl. FO
Fear of the Lord	Emotional Intelligence	Cooking	Spiritual Poverty	Vincentian living

Thanks to the generosity of YOUR Conferences, District Councils and Central Councils who have supported us in prayer, by giving financially (through legacies) and by raising awareness of SVP B-Attitude at local level, we now have this spiritually rich resource to help our 14-18 year old members continue to develop and live their Vincentian lifestyles, rooted in Christ, for the service of the poor.

WE INVITE YOU TO LOGIN AS A 'GUEST' AND CHECK IT OUT AT: [WWW.SVP-B-ATTITUDELIFE.ONLINE](http://www.svp-b-attitudelife.online)



Mini Vinnies' Alby's Story

The Mini Vinnies group of St. Joseph's Primary School in Blaydon have raised funds for an all-terrain wheelchair. Being involved in a Spring Ball to raise those funds, Alby sends his greetings and thanks for all the help!



WE WOULD JUST LIKE TO SAY A HUGE THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING US WITH OUR 'SPRING BALL FOR ALBY'. ALBY ABSOLUTELY LOVES 'NITRO' AND IS SO EXCITED ABOUT EXPLORING PLACES HE HAS PREVIOUSLY NOT BEEN ABLE TO GO! WE THINK THIS PICTURE SAYS IT ALL. THANK YOU SO MUCH AGAIN.

KEITH, SARAH ABLY & AVA X

St Ann's Mini Vinnies

Concern is not enough. The Mini Vinnies of St Ann's School put their concern into action. The thirty children of St Vincent's Class sponsored the education of three school children in India for one year. They even wanted to stretch further and to pay the university's fees for a medical student in India.

To be able to fulfil their wishes, the Mini Vinnies, supported by their class teacher and the members of St Ann's SVP, organised and ran their first mini bazaar.

The event opened with a beautiful performance of the Mini Vinnies song. The children sold jars which they had decorated and filled with sweets, beautiful cards and bookmarks which they had also made. They also donated much loved toys and books to help raise funds. Parents had been clearly busy helping the children in the kitchen and provided some delicious cakes for everyone to enjoy over coffee and a chat after Mass. The event was very well attended and the Mini Vinnies raised the amazing sum of £363.18. The Mini Vinnies were then able to sponsor a medical student in their studies and 8 school children in India for one year. Well done, Mini Vinnies!



Letters & Case Studies from our Twins

As regular readers of Vincentian Concern will be aware, Conferences in England & Wales are twinned with Conferences in Grenada, Guyana, India, Romania, Sudan and South Sudan.



There are three elements to a successful twinning arrangement:

- A spiritual link whereby Conference members pray for each other;
- An exchange of correspondence at least twice a year;
- Financial support to supplement local collections and help with the regular activities of the twinned Conference such as the support of adopted families in India.

The best ways of truly appreciating the impact of Twinnage on the poorest and the most in need in their communities are through direct contact with the beneficiaries during the regular programme of visits and through the letters received from our twins. Reports on the visits appear in VC but we rarely comment on the correspondence. To put this right, we present below a selection of feedback from our Brothers and Sisters bearing in mind that English may be a second or even third language for the correspondent:

"We celebrated the Easter festival in a grand manner. We felt that we were in heaven at the time of the Easter Mass. The next morning, we gave new Dhoties, Lungies and Sarees to the poor and needy." *Tamil Nadu, India*

"Poor children of the school are the real beneficiaries. Contribution of uniforms, medical allowance, educational aids are going on well for the most deserving students. We would like to express our profound gratitude for your help."
Junior Conference, Kerala, India

"Affectionate Greetings: There are about 45 adopted families. The number of cancer patients we help is increasing. We hope you and your members are all in good shape." *Kerala, India*

"We wish you Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Last week we held annual prayer for Vincent de Paul members at Chathiah Church. It was very spiritual and interesting. Nearly 600 members attended. The programme finished at 2pm with Holy Mass and lunch for all members." *Kerala, India*

"We are very proud that we are in direct contact with our twins and let us continue in a spirit of love. Thank you for your prayers and your help. We hope God will listen and bring peace to our country which has lost many people for no cause. Our work cannot progress well because of the continuing war."
Juba, South Sudan (by email)

"We solemnly celebrated the feast of St. Vincent de Paul, our patron saint. On that day, we distributed rice, dal, oil and some other food provisions. They are so thankful for you sending Twinnage." *Andhra Pradesh, India*

"The Guardian Angel Conference has 9 members and we are serving the West Coast Berbice in Region 5. We are presently supporting 9 needy families in that area. For the year 2016, we held two fund raisers to assist our community. We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to you for your support and help during the year. We would like to wish you a Merry Christmas and a very happy New Year 2017." *Berbice, Guyana*

"We the Vincentians of St. Thomas More Conference would like to thank you all for the four twinings we have received for the year. The monies received assisted us in: Purchasing food items for three families on a monthly basis, providing school supplies to two families for the current term and providing 15 meals for the destitute." *Kitty, Georgetown, Guyana*

"Heartly greetings to you and all the members. We are happy to read your letter. Please pray for Sr Beyitha Varikkappilly, who has retired from our Conference and is suffering illness." *Kerala, India*

If any of your Conferences are not in regular contact with your twin, then please contact your Twinnage Officer who will provide alternative contact details for the appropriate Central Council. Most of these now have email facilities and can provide a vital link with some of the more remote Conferences, particularly where there might be language difficulties.



Sudan Projects & Case Studies

In both Sudan and South Sudan, there are Twinnage arrangements and also programmes of work that comprise baby and children feeding centres, vocational training, medical clinics and water distribution as well as the provision of food and essentials for internally displaced people camped out on church lands. We received the following message from Betram Kuol who runs the programmes in South Sudan.

In South Sudan in a couple of past years, headlines highlighted political conflict associated with killing, displacement, human rights abuses, rampant corruption in business and government, high inflation, serious lack of food and impending hunger that affected more than half of the population. Amid the grim picture, when looking at the work of SVDP, you'll see children receiving nutritive supplements and poor adults enjoying free medical care services showing that the effort being made is getting the population healthier and societies empowered, hence becoming self-reliant, turning resilient and more productive and inclusive. You will also see more kids going to school. This all happened when divine hearted, generous and serious people, including you, rolled up their sleeves to design advocacy and fund raising initiatives and development programs that are improving the lives of the disadvantaged poor.

As we gather in holiday season with family and friends and take stock of all we have accomplished in the ending year, it's time to think and focus on the big picture to see clearly that poor communities that we have the pleasure to serve at SVDP with your support are on the right side of history.



SVDP South Sudan

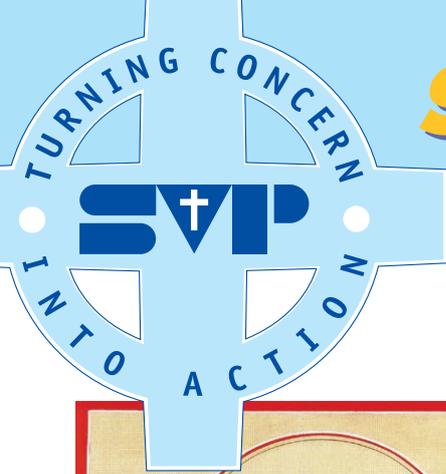
We also received some case studies for students who had completed courses at the Lologo training centre near Juba, South Sudan. Just one example follows:

Case study of Sewing Graduate: Miss Knight Margret

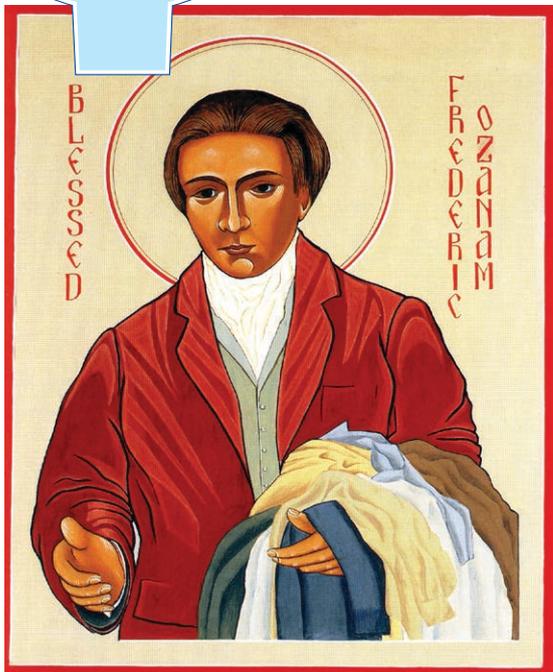
Knight Margret is 27 years old. She is a widow with two children. She lives with her old Grandmother in a remote area mainly inhabited by returnees from Sudan who live in extreme poverty. Before joining and completing her course at St Vincent de Paul centre in Lologo, Margret used to sell tea and sandwiches at the roadside at Buwaba in Gudele West of Juba city. With her meagre income then, she struggled to manage with her two children sometimes relying on aid agencies to get food.

When the Civil War of 2013 broke out, life became more difficult and miserable for her, the two children and her Grandmother because she was left with no source of income to sustain her livelihood. In February 2016, she joined the training course in sewing. Just three months into her training, she showed competency in using her acquired knowledge to do some simple dresses that were good enough to use. During the course, Margret joined a friend who graduated in a previous year and both made and sold clothes to a range of customers. By the time she graduated, Margret already had a good number of clients she regularly served at the friend's place. Her life changed for the better upon graduation when she was given a sewing machine with other start up materials usually given to sewing graduates to help them establish own businesses. Margret managed quickly to rent space in a busy location in Konyo konyo market.

Just a couple of days before last Christmas, we found Margret at her new place of work very busy to meet her clients' demand for Christmas clothes. Margret can't miss any opportunity of speech to thank God and the donors for giving her this training opportunity, which enabled her to generate income and improve her living condition within a short time.



Blessed Frédéric was a Refugee



Our principal founder, Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, was born as a refugee. His parents were what we would now call economic migrants. His father, Jean-Antoine, had become bankrupt, after acting as guarantor for a relative whose business had subsequently failed. Jean-Antoine took his wife Marie to Italy. It was there he had completed his military service with great distinction, rising to the rank of captain in the Hussars. Now, hoping for a renewal of similar good fortune, the Ozanams settled in Milan.

For a while it was a struggle to earn small amounts of money by giving private lessons but Jean-Antoine then found more regular work as a librarian at the famous Ambrosian. At the same time, he began studying part-time at the University of Pavia and, after only two years, obtained a diploma in medicine.

Yet new disappointment still waited. He was once more conscripted into Napoleon's army, as medical officer, at the French military hospital of Milan. This was when Frédéric Ozanam came into the world on 23rd April 1813. Two other children were still living: Élixa ten and Alphonse five. Two children had died in

infancy and for a time it seemed Blessed Frédéric would not survive. Three anxious weeks needed to elapse before he could be taken from the Ozanam house in the Via San Pietro a l'Orto (St Peter in the Garden), for his christening in the nearby church of Our Lady of the Slaves. Troubled times were to continue for more than another year, until Napoleon's defeat finally meant the Ozanams could return to their home in Lyon, where Jean-Antoine established a medical practice. He estimated that one-fifth of his patients would be unable to pay and he vowed to treat those free of charge. After his death, when his three surviving sons, Fr Alphonse, Professor Frédéric and Dr Charles, examined his papers, they discovered that one-third of their father's patients had never been asked for payment.

What will you do to celebrate Refugee Week?

Refugee Week 2017 takes place from 19th - 25th June. It started in 1998 as a direct reaction to hostility in the media and society in general towards refugees and asylum seekers. It is now a national initiative working to counter this negative climate, defending the importance of sanctuary and the benefits it can bring to both refugees and host communities.

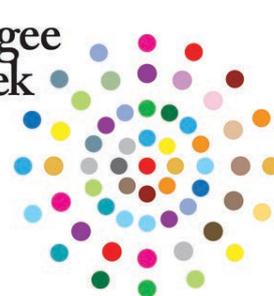
If you are thinking about what you and your Conference can do to mark the week, how about attending the SVP National Meeting 2017 in Liverpool? A variety of speakers will be sharing their expertise on the theme of Welcoming the Stranger on 23rd and 24th June. You can read more about the National Meeting on page 17 of this edition of the Vincentian Concern.

Vincentian Concern would like to hear what your Conference is doing to help welcome Refugees. Email anitab@svp.org.uk with your paragraph on what your Conference is doing to help refugees and asylum seekers with a large digital photo or two to accompany your write up.



Photograph by Tobias Madden

Refugee Week



Reasons to Welcome Immigration - Part 2

In this the second part of a two piece report in Vincentian Concern on immigration, Christopher Maxwell-Stewart and Philip Kerton examine the current situation relating to refugees and asylum seekers and the humanitarian dimension to their situation.

The Current Crisis

The greatest challenge the UK faces today is that of an ageing population. This is the result of a continuing decline in the birth rate combined with the success of the Welfare State by increasing the average life by some 8 years. The fact that we are now extending compulsory full-time education to 18 years (compared to 14 years in 1946) adds to the declining proportion of native-born people who contribute to the financing of the State. In that context immigration by people of working age (paying income tax and VAT, but not claiming benefits) has been and remains crucial to the viability of our State. In particular Immigrants play a vital role in the maintenance of the NHS and care homes for the elderly. The fact that unemployment has fallen below 5% of the working-age population (thought by many as a basic minimum) despite the high level of net immigration, is proof of the strategic value of immigration. Net immigration leads to an increase in the labour force and increases the potential output capacity of the economy; an increase in GDP and creates a more flexible labour market.

In some locations there are justifiable concerns about access to housing and education caused by the influx of migrants. It is noteworthy in this context, however, that Germany which has a much greater influx of migrants, resolves these problems by corresponding allocation of resources.

The Humanitarian Dimension

The world is in the throws of its biggest humanitarian crisis since 1945 with 65 million persons in forced migration. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) notes that these displaced people are made up of: 21.3 million refugees, 3.2 million asylum seekers, and 40.8 million people internally displaced within their own countries. This amounts to one in every 113 people globally, a level of risk for which UNHCR knows no precedent. On average, 24 people were forced to flee each minute in 2015, four times more than a decade earlier.

Some of this is due to drought and flooding but larger migrations are due to violent conflicts. The responsibility for the extremes of climate change and deadliness of the conflicts falls heavily on the industrialised countries. It is their industries which are the causes of global warming and the production of powerful



weapons. Furthermore, it is their demands for oil and strategic minerals which fuel the extremes of violence in many countries.

In that context it is profoundly shocking that 86% of these 65 million are in the care of poor countries who have great difficulty coping with their domestic populations. In the first six months of 2016 just under 600,000 migrants sought refuge in Europe principally from Iran, Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Somalia and Eritrea. Of these just under 29,000 sought asylum in the UK and of these only 33% were granted leave to remain. Of the 160,000 Syrian seeking refuge in Europe only some 4,000 have been accepted in the UK. Child migrants are at great risk in the camps on the French coast facing England and despite a commitment to cease the practice, the UK Government still had 47 unaccompanied children incarcerated in Detention Centres.

These shocking facts provide challenges and opportunities for us Vincentians. Those of us that have been involved in welcoming asylum seekers, refugees and other migrants over the past decade testify as to how great rewards are here today rather than having to wait for the promises enshrined in Matthew 26:9.

Christopher Maxwell-Stewart and Philip Kerton



The Value of the Spiritual Reflection

The Conference meeting opens with prayers followed by a spiritual reflection. According to the Rule (P 48) the reflection is “an essential part of the meeting. Members are invited to comment as a means of sharing their faith and deepening their mutual understanding.” In the discussion members learn from each other and see connections with their Vincentian activity. Some Conferences look at the reflection again just before the Bidding Prayers, enabling them to compose appropriate prayers in preparation for their Vincentian work in the week ahead.

Who chooses the spiritual reflection?

The reflection is often chosen by the Spiritual Adviser, usually the parish priest or a deacon or religious. Today few Conferences have such Spiritual Advisers and increasingly the role is taken by a Conference member. If so, they should persuade National to re-introduce the Society's course for Spiritual Advisers and then duly participate. Members may take turns in preparing a reflection. Some have plenty of material to hand. Others struggle to find something suitable or hastily grab a reading at the last minute. Some provide copies of the text for the other members, which helps with the ensuing discussion.

What can be used for the reflection?



Books of Spiritual Readings are available from SVP National Office. In addition, “The Mind and Heart of a Vincentian” offers a comprehensive exploration of Vincentian spirituality,

stressing the importance of personal and collective prayer as the bedrock of all our Vincentian endeavour. It describes the love of Jesus for the poor which inspired St Vincent and Blessed Frédéric. Chapters on Mary, commentaries on the Beatitudes and the Lord's Prayer, together with sound and practical advice for members, have made this book a much loved resource. Currently out of print, a revised version is being prepared.

For many the obvious resource is Sacred Scripture and we can follow the example of Blessed Frédéric who read a passage from Scripture every day. Websites such as “Sacred Space” offer helpful commentaries, though they need to be shortened for use at the meeting. Reflecting on the Gospel for the following Sunday enables members to become familiar with the passage and they can recall their discussion when they hear the passage again at the Sunday Mass.



Conferences often use extracts from writers on spirituality, works by or about our Vincentian saints, writings by Pope Francis, whose words are so much in tune with our Vincentian spirituality. Other sources include writings from other branches of the Vincentian family, articles from Catholic publications, national and diocesan papers covering topics of concern and need.

Variety opens up our thinking

The reflection does not always need to be written text. Music and paintings can be very fruitful. At one of our National Meetings Sr Maria Robb, a Daughter of Charity, explored our Vincentian spirituality using the song “He ain't heavy, he's my brother.” Rembrandt's painting “The Return of the Prodigal Son,” viewed together perhaps with extracts from Henri Nouwen's book on the subject, would be appropriate for Lent.

What works well for you?

At a recent Membership Development Committee meeting we recognised the need for a resource available to all members, either on the SVP website or in printed form. I am collecting examples of reflections which members currently use. Please contact me and let me know what works well for you, so it can be shared with other members. The following questions may be helpful:

- **What materials do you use for your reflection at your Conference meeting?**
- **How has time spent in discussion on the reflection been of value to you and your members?**
- **What kind of resources would you like?**
- **In what format? - On the SVP website? A book? A loose-leaf folder?**

Please send your thoughts to me, Mary Abel, at:
marye.abel@tiscali.co.uk.

SVP Awareness Month

Awareness month takes place in September, the month in which we celebrate the Feast Day of St Vincent de Paul. This year's theme "Welcoming the Stranger" reflects the Vincentian Family's Year of Collaboration and our celebration of the 400th anniversary of the charisma. A resource pack will be sent to all Conferences in July. It will include a set of five posters highlighting homelessness, grief, hunger and loneliness; parish newsletter ideas, a selection of lectern addresses and guidance notes. A limited number of sets of the five black and white postcards produced for last year's Awareness Month is also available to order.



Members Annual Report

The Society's Annual Report for 2015/16 was published in February. The Members Annual Report has been produced in time for mailing with this edition of the VC in order to save on postage costs. It includes information which is not included in the public Annual Report and which is of more specific interest to members.

Further copies are available and can be ordered from the National Office. In common with our other publications, the Members Annual Report has evolved over the years so your feedback on this latest edition is welcome. Email kenm@svp.org.uk with feedback.

Vincentian Concern Returns in Autumn!

You may have noticed the merging of this Spring / Summer edition of the Vincentian Concern. Spring's edition was put on hold to enable the team to redevelop the new SVP website which is going to be launched soon and which you can also read about on page 16.

To make up for the loss of a Spring VC, we are publishing an additional edition in Autumn! It is planned to reach your Conference by the end of September. Don't forget the importance of Conference contributions. We are especially looking for material for a Conference Spotlight feature, and Specialised Conference Activity feature, as well as Society news and photos. **So please send in your contributions to anitab@svp.org.uk by 17th July 2017 so that they can be included.**





Look out for revamped SVP Website!

We are launching a brand new svp.org.uk website imminently. The website will give an up-to-date, fresh and modern feel to the public of what the Society does, which is a vital part of presenting the SVP clearly and positively to online visitors.

Publicly accessible pages place particular emphasis on case studies – beneficiary and supporter stories to highlight the value of our work in helping vulnerable people.

There is a regularly updated news section, so that members can read new stories and stay in touch with what's going on in SVP England and Wales.

Other pages will help the public get involved in different aspects of the Society from Friends to CSPs to fundraising, make a donation, read about the Society's ethos, and learn about the many aspects of our work.

There is also a comprehensive section for Members, which you will be able to access using your usual log in details. All governance and compliance guidance will be available for download in the Member's area.



We hope that the new website will inspire not just potential members, beneficiaries, funders, and supporters to contact us, but will also provide a clear and accessible route for Members to gain the information and support that you need.

Come to Rome to Celebrate the Vincentian Jubilee, and see Pope Francis

To celebrate the 400th anniversary of the Vincentian Charism, all members are being invited to attend a Vincentian Family Symposium on the weekend of 12th - 15th October 2017.

The Jubilee theme "Welcome the Stranger" is the focus of this event. The Symposium goes from Thursday (for registration only) through Sunday, 1pm.

Pope Francis will join the Family on Saturday 14th October. Also present, will be the reliquary with the Heart of St. Vincent, which has begun its journey throughout the world, with us in Rome for this weekend.

Fr Tomaž Mavrič, CM, President, Vincentian Family Executive Committee writes: "It is a great blessing for the entire Vincentian Family and a beautiful opportunity for us to be renewed in our missionary zeal. We will also be celebrating a prayer vigil in the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, as well as the closing Mass on Sunday at St. Peter's Basilica.

The 400th anniversary of the charism provides us with the perfect opportunity to celebrate our Vincentian heritage, to give thanks for all that has been done and to develop ideas and plans for the future. Of great importance is the consideration of our changing demographics and social contexts, the pressing needs of the poor, and our ability to best respond to these as a Family. I also extend a special invitation to youth (ages 18-28). We hope that the Symposium will also be a powerful time to animate them in their Vincentian vocation.

A website has been created through which Members will be updated on the events which will occur over the weekend: <http://famvin400.info/>

A registration form, available at: <http://famvin400.info/blog/2017/03/03/> needs to be submitted by 1st September 2017.

National Meeting 2017

This year the entire Vincentian family is celebrating the 400th anniversary of the Vincentian Charism. The chosen theme is “Welcoming the Stranger”.



As part of the celebrations the SVP is hosting an event to which all members of the Vincentian family in England, Wales and Scotland are being invited. This event will be held on 23rd and 24th June.

An exciting and comprehensive programme has now been put together with a range of expert speakers looking at how those who often feel ‘outsiders’ can be welcomed in ways that are appropriate to their different situations in life. On Friday 23rd June, the keynote speaker will be former Government Minister and MP, Sarah Teather, now Director of the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS). Sarah will be giving the keynote speech “The Stranger seeking Sanctuary” drawing from her experience heading up JRS of welcoming refugees into communities.

Bertrand Ousset is former National President of SVP France and is now on the CGI international Board, responsible for International Aid and Development. A specialist in international homelessness work, he will give a talk entitled “The Stranger on the Street” about the approach of the SVP to the homeless and poor in Paris.

Monsignor Malachy Keegan has been a priest for over 45 years and has worked internationally as well as in the UK where he was employed by the Home Office to promote interfaith Chaplaincy provision. He is a trained psychotherapist who has ministered for two decades in UK prisons on a local, regional and national level. Monsignor Keegan will be speaking on “The Stranger in Prison.”

There will also be presentations on ‘Welcoming the Stranger through SVP Community Projects’, and by Trustee Ann Harris on “Welcoming the Stranger into our Conference”.

Workshops in smaller groups will focus on Food Poverty - “Feeding the Stranger”, Twinnage - “Reaching out to the Stranger”, Asylum - “Helping the Stranger in our Midst” and Dementia - “Finding the person within”.

The day will close with an annual review by CEO Elizabeth Palmer and National President Adrian Abel, followed by dinner and evening prayer.

The second day of the National Meeting, Saturday 24th June will include a taster session of “SVP Faith in Action”, a talk by SVP Spiritual Advisor Fr Paul Roche (CM) on “The Vincentian Charism and the Stranger”, and a talk by former MP and long serving SVP member and Patron John Battle entitled “Turning Concern into Action - Living the Charism. SVP Youth Coordinator Claz Gomez, will give the final presentation on “Passing the Charism to the next generation” and the day will close with a Mass at Liverpool Cathedral celebrated by Archbishop Malcom McMahon.

CEO Elizabeth Palmer says: “The Society is delighted to be hosting this meeting for SVP members and other Vincentians. I invite everyone to attend and to share the joy of our charism and learn from our speakers and each other about how best to welcome the stranger in our midst”.



Use of Conference Funds How are Conference Funds allowed to be spent?

One thing that emerged from the successful Treasurer Training courses that have recently been run across the country was that there was some confusion over what Conferences are allowed to spend Conference funds on.

This article has been put together to cover the most important points. These rules have not changed but it is certainly helpful to ensure that we are all familiar with them.

All charities are legally required to only spend their funds on their listed charitable objectives. Charities cannot simply take their pick of worthy causes. In order for donors to have confidence that donations will be spent in a way that they are happy to support, charities have to provide an explanation of their charitable objectives, to which they are then obliged to adhere. A simple explanation of what we do is listed with the Charity Commission: "The objective of the charity is the relief of poverty, both material and emotional in England & Wales and abroad through the person to person involvement of its voluntary members engaged in befriending and through 'special works', which are projects established to address specific needs in the local community."

There is nothing new about this concept of person to person contact. It was always expounded by St Vincent de Paul such as when he scolded the Ladies of Charity in Chatillon when he discovered that they were sending their maid servants to visit the poor families in their care. He considered that person to person contact was an essential part of one's Vincentian vocation. In addition to this we also have guidelines from the Internal Statutes: 4.28: "The Conference should expend its funds only for the benefit of families and persons under the care of the Society and its Special Works. A Conference cannot donate funds to other Charities or Special Activities without the advance written authority of the Trustees."

Points to note:

Person to person contact is crucial.

"Families and persons under the care of"/ "Person to person involvement"/ "Befriending"; this is at the heart of the SVP. When we visit we give our love, our talents and our time. Meeting people in person, you are better able to discover whether those we are helping have other needs we can assist with in addition to the needs with which we can assist, in addition to the needs of which we are aware. This is as important, perhaps even more important, than any financial assistance we offer. Please ensure that, if you are assisting people financially, one of your SVP members has directly met them at least once. We have to have direct contact, even if they are being introduced to us by those outside the SVP (schools, social workers, etc. unless the support is part of a trustee sanctioned scheme such as the School Outreach Programme.)

We cannot give funds to other charities and organisations, no matter how worthy.

Other charities may well be doing fantastic work; however, when someone gives a donation to the SVP, they expect the SVP to spend that donation on SVP activities rather than forward it on to another charity. If you gave a donation to Oxfam, you would not expect them to forward it on to Save the Children. We have a legal obligation to ensure that any donations we receive are spent in line with our own charitable objects and the Charity Commission is strict on this. These rules cover giving donations to AND buying things on behalf of other charities and organisations.

Sometimes we might want to support one of our Vincentian partner organisations. For example, Depaul UK - a charity that helps the homeless. While they are Vincentian, they are a completely separate charity from the SVP. If you wanted to support them financially from the Conference Funds then you would need the Trustees' approval first. Similarly, you would need Trustees' approval if you wanted to financially support a Special Activity. A Special Activity is a non-SVP project that your SVP members are heavily involved with, for example a non-SVP food bank with which your members regularly volunteer.

To request approval from the Trustees, please contact John Mesher at National Office with details of the requests and he will pass them on.



CONFERENCE FUNDS

Conference Funds: Allowed to spend their money?

Not Allowed	Allowed
<p>X Payments to schools where we do not have contact with the families or children helped. The school may ask for a pot of money to be used to provide uniforms and other assistance to families who are struggling but will refuse to disclose details of who is being helped for confidentially reasons. <i>Why not?</i> We need to have person to person contact.</p>	<p>✓ Payments to families or children in need who have been introduced by the school. They have been met by an SVP member at least once. If the school refuse to hand out contact details, ask for your details to be passed to the family and for them to contact you directly. A one off grant may be made through the SVP School Outreach Programme (see page 21) using the forms and letter provided.</p>
<p>X Christmas party attended only by SVP members. <i>Why not?</i> Not charitable expenditure.</p>	<p>✓ Christmas party for the Conference's beneficiaries.</p>
<p>X Gifts for members retiring from the Conference / Council. <i>Why not?</i> Not charitable expenditure.</p>	<p>✓ Members holding a private collection among themselves to pay for leaving gifts from their own personal resources rather than Conference funds.</p>
<p>X Donations to, or purchases on behalf of, other charities - local, national or international. This includes charities such as Cafod and DePaul Trust. Donations to, or purchases on behalf of, the church. <i>Why not?</i> Outside our charitable objectives. Donors have the right to have their donations spent on SVP work.</p>	<p>✓ Members can donate their time to other charities and the church. Members can bring other charities to the attention of other potential donors and encourage them to donate directly. We cannot collect on behalf of other organisations or forward donations to them.</p>
<p>X Purchasing food for a non-SVP food bank. <i>Why not?</i> Outside our charitable objectives. Donors have the right to have their donations spent on SVP work.</p>	<p>✓ Members can donate their time to take food that has been collected (i.e. food given to them rather than purchased using Conference Funds). Members can directly assist those people they meet while volunteering at a non-SVP food bank - provided this is direct to the individual and not via the project/organisation.</p>
<p>X Sending money abroad other than through Twinnage. <i>Why not?</i> There are very strict rules which need to be adhered to regarding the transfer of money overseas in relation to money laundering legislation and fundraising regulation.</p>	<p>✓ Members can support those in need abroad through twinning and Twinnage projects and the SVP Disaster Fund.</p>

The work of SVP Conferences is very broad and it would not be possible to cover all possible examples. By necessity, many decisions will have to come down to your judgement. Keep in mind the following questions when considering how to spend Conference funds and you shouldn't go too far wrong:

- Are you helping direct rather than through another organisation? Have your SVP members had direct person-to-person contact with who you are helping?
- Is this appropriate for a charity dedicated to helping the poor and those in need?



SVP Banking



Following increasing speculation in the press regarding the future of the Coop Bank the Trustees agreed that it would be prudent to transfer the bulk of Society funds into the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF Bank).

Balances over £500 were transferred on 27th March. This equated to approximately 900 transfers.

Since then the Finance Team in Bradford have been monitoring the remaining Coop accounts and transferring money back in as required. The Board are keeping the situation under constant review. As soon as the Board of Trustees feel it is prudent to do so the balances will be transferred back to all accounts.

In the meantime, meetings are taking place with a number of other banks with a view to changing provider if required. Treasurers who have queries should contact the Finance office in Bradford (**01274 513045**) or speak to John Mesher at National Office (**020 7703 3030**).

Most of those members who have phoned with queries to date appear NOT to have read the email sent out to all Conferences on 28th March 2017.

When there is any further news Conferences and projects will be contacted by email. Any Conferences which need to update their email contact should advise Teddy Curran at National Office on **020 7703 3030**.

Have you tried Faith in Action?

The new half-day Faith in Action course is being rolled out across England and Wales and it's going down a storm among new members and those of longstanding.

At a session organised recently for Southwark Central Council members at St Boniface in Tooting, south London, everyone attending said it was good or excellent, and 95% said it was even better than they expected.

They all agreed that it improved their knowledge of the SVP and 95% said they would be better members as a result. 100% said they would definitely recommend Faith in Action to other SVP members. After a session organised by Birmingham Central Council at Our Lady & St Kenelm in Halesowen in the West Midlands, Conference President, Mike Weaver, welcomed the lively, interactive style of the course.

"Time passed very quickly through a combination of



MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

presentations, small group sessions, question-and-answer times and informal breaks," he said, adding: "The use of case studies to illustrate the SVP approach was especially interesting and helpful."

Don't miss out - if you would like to attend the Faith in Action course, contact your Central Council and ask for it. And when you have attended the course, make sure the box is ticked on your database entry.

Pictured: Birmingham CC trainer, Bob Service, with some of the Faith in Action delegates in Halesowen.

SVP & School Outreach

In recent years a number of Conferences have asked if they can spend Society funds by giving directly to schools who have identified families in need.

Schools themselves are unwilling to pass on details about these families to the local SVP Conferences, who are therefore unable to visit the family in question.

On this basis the Trustees have been clear that however real the need, this is not an appropriate use of funds because such use of funds does not involve person to person contact. However, in the spirit of our Society we have found a way of helping those in need in schools which is both acceptable and beneficial to those in need and to the Society.

Person to Person Contact

First, to clarify from a Charity Commission perspective the situation is as follows. Our objectives as shown on the Charity Commission's website are:

The objective of the charity is the relief of poverty, both material and emotional in England & Wales and abroad through: the person to person involvement of its voluntary members engaged in befriending and through 'special works', which are projects established to address specific needs in the local community. From an internal policy perspective the situation is as follows.

The Society's International Rule states "members show their commitment through person to person contact." This concept is given more substance in the Internal Statutes (4.28): "The Conference should expend its funds only for the benefit of families and persons under the care of the Society and its Special Works." This concept was reiterated by M. Emmanuel Bailly, Blessed Frédéric Ozanam's mentor and the Society's first President General.

Seek and find those in need

The Society's stated mission is to "seek and find those in need" and yet it is not always easy to find those most in need of the Society's help. Often schools and similar bodies are better placed to do this but are restricted by data protection and other concerns in sharing this data with the SVP.

In 2015 the Trustees were approached by a Conference in SW Lancashire wishing to address this problem. The result was a pilot scheme, supported by the Trustees and funded by a legacy, which sought to address the need and also to develop person to person support via the scheme. The pilot has been completed and the Trustees have agreed that the programme can be adopted nationally by Conferences who would like to operate the scheme.



Methodology

Assistance may now be given to families via schools in the following way:

Conferences:

- Conferences wishing to participate in school outreach should ring-fence some funds in order to respond to requests.
- Conferences should contact the school or schools locally and explain the scheme.
- Schools who wish to nominate families will need to outline the requirements to the Conference.
- The Conference will discuss the requirements and if in agreement will provide a one-off grant via the school of **no more than £100**.
- A letter **must** accompany the grants and the SVP beneficiary leaflet must also be provided (available from National Office). **No further financial assistance may be given without direct contact with the family.**
- Records must be kept of all grants made. Conference discussions regarding grants should be recorded in the minutes, grants made should be recorded in the appropriate quarterly financial return, and families assisted should be recorded in the annual Secretarial Return.

In this way initial financial support can be provided and the family will be made aware of the SVP. It will be clear that any continued support must involve person to person contact. It is hoped that this will be an effective means of seeking and finding those families most in need.



New Legacy Policy

Legacies are a wonderful and generous gift to the Society and are vital to our continued growth.



In recent years, however, it has become apparent that not all Conferences and Councils know how to spend an unexpected windfall and money in some areas was accumulating while it was desperately needed in other areas of the Society. For this reason, the Board and National Council introduced a new legacy policy just over a year ago. It was agreed that all Conferences and Councils with legacies would be written to, asking them for a spending plan.

The responses to the legacy allocation plan requirement have been mixed. Some conferences and councils have grasped the opportunity to innovate and expand. One Conference has used their legacy to help establish a community support project in their area - in this case a centre for older people. Another Conference used their legacy money to purchase 10 tablets for housebound visited parishioners, which enabled them to watch live streams of Mass. Another Conference used their legacy to pilot a new outreach scheme in schools, whilst yet another used their money to support a refugee family.

Some Conferences have borne in mind the needs of the wider society. To date, £10,000 has been contributed to the roof fund in Tyne and £9,000 has been contributed to the Young Vincentian programme, whilst other Conferences have shared their legacy with less well-off Conferences in their district.

However, it has also become clear that some Conferences and Councils do not have a clear vision as to how this money can be used locally and that plans for the money often involve the substitution of normal income and payment for events which would take place anyway, such as outings and Christmas parties for older people in the parish. Some have even wanted to give the money to other legal entities, such as the parish, the local school or other charities.

The current status

To date 32 Conferences / Councils have submitted allocation requests which have been fully approved with a value of over £578,000 and 4 applications are still under review for a value of just over £72,000. 10 Conferences / Councils have not submitted an allocation within the 12 month deadline for a total value of £178,000. 4 Conferences / Councils have had their allocation request declined with a total value of 138,000 and 7 Conferences / Councils have had their allocation request partially approved with an outstanding balance of over £131,000. The amount of money in the existing legacies held for Conferences and Councils is still impacting on the Society's ability to apply for funds in areas of real need and the situation is untenable.

In light of the above, the Board has agreed a new legacy policy for all legacies received after 1st April 2017.

The key changes

Conferences and Councils will receive up to £5K (subject to Conference balances) immediately for their own use, with no plans required. This is an increase from £1K. A plan for any money over £5K must be received within 3 months, with one month's grace for re-submissions.

After the 3 month period any unallocated money will be moved to a central holding fund to be spent as the Trustees see fit. Money can then be put to work immediately where it is needed most, nationally or regionally. Plans may not exceed 3 years compared with 5 years previously and must reflect additional activity or an enhancement of existing activity. Plans for legacies over 15k must benefit other Conferences / Councils / Projects or national undertakings. In the case of restricted legacies the same time scale applies but if a decision cannot be made as to the appropriate use of the funds a Trustee will visit to offer advice. If a way forward still proves difficult to agree, the Society will seek Charity Commission involvement.

Finally, charges will be applied to **all legacies**, even those received by Councils. These have been revised and are available in the policy, which can be downloaded from the website. It is hoped that in this way, unwieldy balances will not be allowed to build up and Conferences and Councils will be encouraged to be innovative in their approach, they will not be able to substitute funds for everyday fundraising and grant applications can be written without fear of rejection due to excessive reserves. Money will also be spent where it is most urgently needed, wherever that is in the Society.

Conferences and Data Protection

The Data Protection Act 1998 covers the collection, storage, sharing and disposing of an individuals' personal / sensitive personal details.

When we give our own personal details to a bank or doctor we expect them to keep it safe, only use it for the purpose intended and not to share it inappropriately. We all need to do the same with the information we hold on members, beneficiaries and donors. Due to the nature of the work we carry out we all have a responsibility to comply with data protection.

Conference Data Protection Packs

Data Protection Packs were sent to Conferences week commencing 1st May 2017. The packs are user friendly and contain guidance and tools to assist Conferences and Members to comply with the SVP Data Protection Policy and the Data Protection Act 1998.

The pack contains the following:

- **Introductory letter**
- **Guidance for Conferences**
- **Conference checklist**
- **Members Do's & Don'ts**
- **Beneficiary leaflets x 10**



It is important that the information is read carefully and discussed at your Conference meeting. Data Protection is a legal requirement and is governed by the Information Commissioners Office (ICO).

Data Protection Officer

The aim is to have a Data Protection Officer in each Central Council in the same way we have a Safeguarding Officer in each CC. When the Data Protection Officers are in place, they will be provided with training so they can become the first point of call should a Conference / Member have any enquiries regarding data protection.

Conference email address

Another area we are currently exploring is providing each Conference with an SVP email address. The email address will look something like; stmarysdartford@svp.org.uk.



Further information will be communicated to Conferences as we progress with this.

Frequently asked questions

Already National Office has received some feedback and questions regarding data protection. National Office will use this information to compile 'FAQs' on data protection which will be available on the secure area of the SVP website.

What to do next...

Conferences should complete the checklist provided in the pack. Some of the answers will be 'No' and this is ok. The idea is that you establish the areas where you are not complying with data protection and create a plan covering what you can do to comply. Then start working towards putting your plan into practice. After going through the checklist, set yourself a target, then after 3 months go through the checklist again and see what progress is being made.

If you have any questions or require further information regarding Data Protection please discuss these at your Conference meeting first and then contact Matthew Stockton at National Office on 0207 703 3030 or email matthews@svp.org.uk



SVP Camps Appeal



Do you know a child aged between about 8 and 13 who would appreciate a holiday this summer? The SVP runs summer camps which offer a week's holiday to children, both boys and girls, in a variety of locations.

Around 1,000 children enjoy a week of games, sports, outings, and other exciting activities in a safe environment, often in areas of natural beauty.

Some camps are by the sea, so the children can play on the sand, go crabbing and swim. Others offer outdoor adventure style activities like rock climbing and canoeing. If you would like to send a child to one of the camps, please contact the relevant camp representative from the list below to get an application form. Some help is also available from the Holiday Fund if your Conference cannot find all the finances needed.

Camps are run by enthusiastic volunteers who give up a week to come and help out. If you would like to volunteer at a camp, please contact the relevant person. You will need to attend some training in health and safety and safeguarding, including getting a DBS check. This is all organised by the camp.

Urgent SVP Camps Appeal

All camps are heavily subsidised so that those most in need can benefit. Funding is becoming increasingly difficult. If your Conference could support the valuable work of camps, please help by sending a donation to national office with a covering letter making clear the money is to be used for SVP camps.

Camp Contacts:

HOLY ISLAND (TYNE CC)

Michael Willcock - michael.willcock@btinternet.com

JOHN BOSCO (ALL LONDON CCs)

Claude Warnick - c.m.warnick.01@cantab.net

MABLETHORPE (NOTTINGHAM CC)

Paul Willerton - paulwillerton@yahoo.com

LEEDS (LEEDS CC)

Gary Conway - gnc2@hotmail.co.uk

WIRRAL (SHREWSBURY CC)

Mike Fahey - mike.fahey@me.com

STOCKPORT (SHREWSBURY CC)

Vince McAllister - vnmccl@btinternet.com

LIVERPOOL (LIVERPOOL CC)

Tom McHale - mchale@easy.com

Health & Safety: Planning a Safe Day Trip

When the sun's shining is a time when most people enjoy a day out into the local countryside or further afield. A well-planned day trip provides excitement, interest and a sociable time for those on the trip. A day trip to a museum, national heritage trust property or a show needs to be planned carefully as the SVP has a duty of care to ensure that all persons on the outing remain safe.

Event planning: Attention to detail is a priority, people's needs should be assessed before any planned outing to ensure they are fit to travel and are not put at risk of injury. The trip will need to be planned in advance, and Conference members given delegated roles during the trip. The destination should be suitable and sufficient for accommodating the needs of those on the trip, with some destinations not being appropriate while other destinations are perfect for the group. Therefore, before planning any day trip, consult with the persons going on the trip about their preferred destination. When planning a trip, it is recommended that one person is designated as the lead person, to be responsible for organising and managing the trip. All other Conference members are given specific roles, and meetings should be held regularly to plan the details of the day trip. It is good practice to contact the destination to ensure all information is gathered and discuss facilities with the location to ensure they meet the needs.

Checklists: The key points to check on the destination are:

- Is there access to disabled parking?
- Is there easy access to the venue?

- Are there disabled access toilets?
- Can dietary considerations be met by the catering facilities?
- Is it easy to access the venue using a wheelchair, and are there any obstacles that need to be considered?

The key responsible person planning the outing should:

- Have a planned schedule of the day.
- Ensure that there are adequate numbers of Conference members available to go on the outing.
- Ensure persons have the right equipment for the activities undertaken on the outing.
- Provide specific instruction and information to all Conference members regarding the outing.
- Record a risk assessment and put in place reasonable controls to reduce any risk.
- Ensure a debrief is held after the outing to understand what went well and were there any areas for improvement.
- Investigate and review all reports of ill health or injuries caused during the outing.

Conference members on the outing should:

- Ensure the safety of the persons
- Report any accidents and incidents during the outing
- Not deviate from the planned schedule
- Ensure everybody drinks water regularly to prevent dehydration.

*Bill Rogerson CMIOSH, LPD, AaPS, Cert Ed,
Health and Safety Consultant*

SVP Secretarial Return: Changes

We are making some important changes to the return for the SVP year that has just started - at the beginning of April 2017. Please see the following changes that are proposed.

Food Banks and Soup Runs: We know that some Conferences work extremely hard for these projects that help people who are often struggling. However, the reporting of the Food Banks & Soup Run figures has not been uniform across all Conferences as we think the return was not clear on how to enter this.

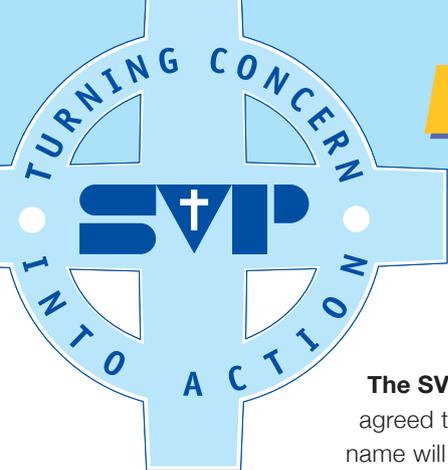
We will be separating out the Food Banks & Soup Runs from the data we record for assistance given as part of visits by Conference members. We will now ask for separate figures showing how many Conferences are engaged with these activities and how many people are being helped. By the nature of these projects it is understood that these figures will often be estimates, but this is something we would very much like to know

Validation: We will be including some basic validation on some of the entry fields where there are common errors. For example:

- Occasionally a number typed might be repeated by a sensitive keyboard giving an unexpectedly large number and the system will flag this up for correction.
- When a number of visits are entered the system will ensure that corresponding beneficiaries have been entered for the same category.



Membership Report: We will be adjusting the Membership Report that is produced and that we use to collate the overall membership statistics, this report is also available for each Conference for their own reference. It will be clearer and more concise than the current one.



Fundraising

Fundraising Promise

The SVP has recently registered with the new Fundraising Regulator. This means the Society has agreed to the commitment made to donors and the public set out in the Fundraising Promise; the Society's name will appear in the list of registered charities when this is published on the Regulator's website and

the Regulator's badge must be displayed on all future SVP fundraising materials. The badge is available in a selection of commonly used formats from the National Office Fundraising Team: fundraising@svp.org.uk. The Fundraising Promise aligns comfortably with the Society's current fundraising policy and reflects many of our Vincentian values. For example, it demonstrates our commitment to the high standards set out in the Fundraising Code of Practice; that we undertake to be clear, open and honest in how we present our fundraising needs; that we will relate to our supporters fairly and reasonably and with due respect and we will be accountable and responsible in our management of resources and in responding to complaints. www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk



Registered with
**FUNDRAISING
REGULATOR**



Jim walking the Camino for the SVP

Never Too Old...

Jim Monaghan a member from Our Lady of England SVP Conference, Storrington has taken up the challenge of walking a pilgrimage to raise money for the Society.

Jim writes: "As this edition of the VC goes to print, I am walking the Camino de Santiago - a 500-mile pilgrimage through France and Spain, for the SVP. I am a 73-year-old father of six children and eight grand-children and to allay your concerns, I am fit and an experienced walker! I have travelled the world throughout my working life and have seen open sewers and filthy water supplies, drug and alcohol addiction, hungry people and two-in-a-bed hospital wards. Throughout this time I have always remembered the 'pennies' my school in Ireland, collected to support 'The Missions' worldwide. Now it's my turn to help the 'marginalised' through my 2017 Camino. As you read this, I'm carrying my 16lb back pack 500 miles, for 31 days, through the highest pass in the Pyrenees at over 5,000 feet. Would you please consider supporting me via my Just Giving page at: www.justgiving.com/fundraising/James-Monaghan4 where I'm posting frequent updates on my progress and experiences. Thank you so much if you have already supported me."

National Raffle Results

This year's National Raffle was well supported. 45,436 tickets were sold and after deducting prizes and costs, a total of over £35,000 was raised for the work of the Society, split equally between participating Central Councils and the National Office. Thank you to everyone who took part and if you bought one of the winning tickets, congratulations. If not, be sure to buy a ticket in 2018!

PRIZE	NUMBER	AREA
£3000	038080	Southport
£2000	034515	Hessle
£1000	056121	Bradford
£100	009710	Durham
£100	038199	Sheppey
£100	065202	Bexley
£100	018110	Maidenhead
£100	018032	Leicester
£100	027319	Chard
£100	008331	Haxby
£100	045362	Worthing
£100	004487	Islington
£100	073744	London

PRIZE	NUMBER	AREA
£50	026514	Wirral
£50	019218	Scarborough
£50	018970	Roehampton
£50	007571	Sutton Coldfield
£50	014230	Birmingham
£50	031160	Crook, Durham
£50	059886	Grange over Sands
£50	029001	Swindon
£50	071496	Aintree
£50	014319	Bangor



Please check your ticket. If you are a winner get in touch to claim your prize!

Behind the Scenes at National Office

In this edition of Vincentian Concern, we take a look at the Fundraising Department.



Ken Madine joined the National Office in January as Head of Fundraising, Communications and Marketing. He previously worked for a fundraising consultancy, supporting a wide range of charitable organisations with major fundraising campaigns, including several Catholic dioceses. Prior to that, he worked with Victim Support, Age UK, Christian Aid and CAFOD.

Outside of the SVP Ken is involved with his local parish in south London, where he plays the guitar and bass guitar at Mass and for five years he visited HMP Brixton where he supported the Catholic chaplaincy team on Sunday mornings. He has a long-standing interest in inter-faith relations and serves on his local "Faiths Together" group and is also involved with a Youth Theatre charity. Having worked in fundraising for over 30 years, Ken has come to see it as a ministry: "When we are involved with something which has the power to transform lives there's a sense in which, rather than asking for money, we are inviting people to join us in a mission to create something amazing and new, which will help build God's Kingdom on earth."

Having seen the many ways in which the SVP's work touches people's lives, Ken feels optimistic about what the Society can achieve in the future: "I was so encouraged to find that the SVP remains strong, its influence and capability are growing and its members are quietly meeting the many challenges they face on a daily basis. It's exciting to think of how much more could be done if we can find and unlock the resources our members need".

Aisha McCarthy joined the SVP as Fundraising Officer in April 2016 and manages the legacy accounts and supporter publications such as the Friends Newsletter.

She previously volunteered for several charities including St Mungo's, Crisis, Bliss and a hostel for Young people and has worked with many people suffering from loneliness and isolation. The SVP's focus on that, and the wide range of



services its volunteers provide to people of all demographics, drew her to the Society. "It's amazing that the SVP is able to achieve so much through the goodwill of people who are willing to help others voluntarily. I am very happy to be a part of that network of support".

Aisha says that she feels welcomed by the SVP and enjoys helping members on issues around their work and finance. She also enjoys chatting to members about their lives and hearing about the work they do in their Conferences.

Outside of work Aisha manages a family activity group for other parents with children under 16 who struggle with finding activities or events for their children. She has a keen interest in conservation and environmental issues, such as recycling textiles, eliminating food waste and the protection of natural landscapes.



Christopher Vasey is part-time Trust Fundraiser at the SVP and has worked at the organisation since October 2016. His duties entail everything from writing funding proposals to trusts and foundations, to researching and analysing new potential sources of funding and helping out his co-workers wherever necessary.

Each day provides a new challenge, and he has found that being adaptable is vital. Prior to the SVP Chris worked for health and social care charities, including the Carers Trust and Thames Hospice and at Birmingham University.

He enjoys contributing to the mission of the SVP because it is an opportunity to help make the world a better place. Trust fundraising itself requires many of the Vincentian values including listening, being compassionate and responsive. Chris says that "being at SVP is a great opportunity to work with committed people who are very inspired and motivated about their work, and the SVP."

Chris spent his childhood years in Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire, and has lived in London for over ten years. Outside of work he enjoys reading, films, basketball, tennis, cycling, the arts and frequently visits London's museums and art galleries.



A Souper SVP Lunch!



On Tuesday 14th March, the annual SVP Lenten Soup for Sudan Lunch was held at the Sacred Heart Parish in Flitwick. Each year the parish room is transformed into a restaurant for lunchtime; SVP members and their spouses make a variety of soups and another generous parishioner bakes homemade rolls. No charge is made, no expenses are claimed and donations are quietly but very gratefully accepted. On the day, although some soup ran out, people kept coming and new places had to be set; SVP members were kept very busy serving, replenishing plates and washing up. Over £535 was donated on the day, and a further £92 at a coffee morning held the following Friday, totalling over £625. Money raised from the lunch has previously always been sent to the baby feeding programme run by the SVP in South Sudan, this year however, money has been sent to support famine relief work by the SVP in South Sudan.



St Therese of Lisieux RC Church Toddler Group

Since the Parish of St Therese of Lisieux in Ingleby Barwick, Middlesbrough CC, was officially founded in 1994, the Parishioners have worked and prayed tirelessly to realise their dream of having their own Church building. Finally, last year their dream became a reality and the new church was built and officially opened. A new SVP Conference was formed in the new church in 2016. As the parish has lots of families with young children, members realised the great need in the parish for a Parent and Toddler Group. The SVP helped parishioners host their first toddler group session on 20 February which was fully booked very quickly with a reserve list forming. The group is very popular, with parents enjoying a chat over refreshments, and the children enjoying playtime with toys. Members have received very good feedback.

SVP Christmas Hampers



SVP Northampton Sacred Heart Conference began their hamper project in November by putting up a 'Giving Tree' in the church.

Members hung tags on its branches specifying items needed for 38 hampers and

parishioners contributed/financed the dry goods by taking tags off the tree and bringing back the items. To tags saying 'donation' the members stapled a Gift Aid envelope. They used the donations to buy additional dry goods and to fund the £10 donation they put in hampers along with an SVP Christmas card. As their funds before Christmas had been very low the Conference applied for and received support for the project from the David Young's Charity. On hamper day itself members had lots of help to 'build' the hampers from SVP members and other parishioners. Local wholesaler HG Collins Fresh Produce very generously provided lots of fresh fruit and vegetables for the hampers. The Conference wishes to thank David Collins and his team, as well as Plastek UK of Mansfield who generously donated the cardboard boxes.

Bedford DC Lenten Reflection



Bedford District SVP held a Lenten reflection on 11th March at St Philip and St James church. A reflection on the thoughts and works of Blessed Frédéric was followed by Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, Confession, and Benediction. 46 people attended including several non-SVP members.

Fr Jonathan Hill and Deacon Rev Tony Quinlan kindly provided support. The refreshments were provided by the members and everything that remained was delivered to and gratefully accepted by Dine on the Street - a charity helping homeless people.



Menevian Vincentians Pilgrimage

Vincentians from far and wide throughout Menevia travelled up to make their annual Pilgrimage to the church and Welsh National shrine of Our Lady of the Taper, Cardigan on Sunday 25th September 2016. Following a warm address from Fr Phillip Harries and then welcoming Fr Mansel Usher to lead with the Mass of Rededication, the President of Menevia Central Council then proceeded to light the special candle which was held aloft by the District President of Swansea, Alan Jones. The SVP Rule Book was then taken by the President of West Menevia, Mary Harries where it was blessed by Fr Usher. The Rededication service then proceeded with congregational prayers and hymns were led by organist Sr Angela Murray OSU. At the end, the Central Council President, Jo Regan warmly thanked all the Vincentian pilgrims for their presence and prayers and made special reference to Fr Usher in becoming their new Menevian SVP chaplain, as Fr Teyrnon Williams had now taken on another post. She then invited everyone to gather around the altar for an historic photo snap of the Vincentian pilgrims together with Fr Usher. The pilgrims then walked down to the adjoining parish hall where parish and Vincentian members of Our Lady of Taper church had prepared a very welcoming table of food and refreshments for everyone. This was greatly enjoyed by everyone. A memorable Menevian Vincentian 2016 pilgrimage!

Need Funds? Have a Book Sale!

For the past few years, Westminster Cathedral Conference has made useful sums of money by holding book sales. It started when 2 members needing to downsize, asked for donations of books, and it snowballed from there. The Conference now has book sales every other month in Cathedral Hall, from 9.30am - 1.30pm on Sundays. They find that as well as raising funds, it also raises the SVP's profile in the parish. But, says the Conference, be warned, it's hard work, with plenty of heavy lifting. The Conference's Top Tips:

- Sell CDs and DVDs as well. We charge £1 per disc, and make almost as much as on books.
- Rotate the stock. If a book hasn't sold in 2 or 3 sales, give it to the SVP shop or another charity shop.
- Pile it high, sell it cheap!

Coffee, Cake & Pancakes!

The SVP at St Teresa's Parish, Beaconsfield run a Coffee morning each Tuesday.

On February 28th - Shrove Tuesday - they invited the Bucks Dementia Care Fund to hold an event to raise funds to employ an Admiral Nurse to work in Beaconsfield. Admiral Nurses support those suffering from dementia and their families. Dr Hilda Hayo, CEO of Admiral Nurses, attended to explain their work and answer questions. As well as tea, coffee, cakes and biscuits, visitors were offered pancakes. The event was well attended and £1008.36 raised from donations and a raffle.



A Fruitful Year!

Helen O'Brien writes: 2016, such a fruitful year for the newly commissioned Mini Vinnies of St Ignatius, Ossett! They got off to a great start holding a 'Bake off' in the Summer after the annual SVP Mass of healing, judged by some of the expert bakers of the parish! And enjoyed thoroughly by all! They have set up and run a friendship stop within the school at play times to ensure all pupils feel included. They ran a plant stall at the Parish Summer fayre. Celebrated a special Mass with fellow Mini Vinnies and Bishop Stock at Leeds Cathedral. They contributed to the children's Sunday liturgy by making an Advent wreath. Finally they made beautiful prayer cards which they included in Christmas hampers, which they made for local people in need. It is wonderful to see their enthusiasm and willingness to serve others, a fine example for us all!



Pretty Poinsettias Sale

SVP members from Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception SVP, Haigh, near Wigan raised £225 through the sale of Poinsettias at Christmas time.

Parishioners bought the flowers after Mass the week before Christmas and then donated them to the church in memory of a loved one. The altar, crib and side altars were then decorated with the plants. "It made a very pretty sight" says Conference President Margaret Riley. Money raised will be used for work in Sudan and for Conference activities.



Father Wilfred Pereppadan from Olton Friary blessing the new van.



Food for Thought

SVP Birmingham Central Council have been supporting a very successful food distribution project in the Greater Birmingham area for the past 5 years. The success of the project is due to the generosity of the Costco chain of cash-and-carry warehouses and the hard work and dedication of volunteers from the SVP Conferences in the Solihull Parishes of St George and St Theresa and Olton Friary, alongside a number of loyal volunteers and non-SVP members from other parishes. Each day the surplus food from Costco in Aston is delivered to a number of centres around Birmingham from where it is distributed to those most in need. Organisations like St Chad's Sanctuary and the Brushstrokes Project benefit from this food. Thanks to a grant from SVP Birmingham Central Council volunteers were able to buy a "new" van when their old van was finally "retired".



Funbola & Coffee

St Wilfred & St Ninian's Conference in Warwick Bridge, Carlisle, held a coffee morning and said goodbye to some dearly beloved supporters. Mass was celebrated by Fr John Miller, in the newly renovated Pugin church of Our Lady and St Wilfrid's, Warwick Bridge. This was followed by a parish coffee morning hosted by the SVP Conference members. Apart from home-baked scones and carrot cake, the star attraction was the tombola which was run by SVP member Marguerite Spencer. A vote of thanks was offered by Bob Jones (President) and Martin McSweeney (Treasurer) to Fr John Millar and Fr Anthony Gaskin (in his absence) for all their encouragement and support in setting up St Wilfrid and St Ninian's Conference. Fr John and Fr Anthony are moving from Our Lady & St Joseph's Carlisle to St John XXIII in Preston on Monday 9th January - they will be fondly missed by all.



Christmas Lunch at St Teresa, Beaconsfield

On December 25th, 2016, approximately fifty people came together for a community Christmas Dinner at St Teresa's Parish Centre, Beaconsfield. After enjoying mulled wine they shared a beautiful meal of festive food, including roast turkey, ham or a vegetarian option, stuffing, gravy, roast and mashed potatoes, and a variety of vegetables, followed by dessert choices of Christmas pudding, trifle, and cheese, with mince pies, coffee and chocolates. They began by pulling crackers and finished, at about 3pm, by singing carols. This was a very happy occasion. The event was open to all who wished to join the members, and was designed to provide an opportunity for those who might otherwise have been on their own to share time together on Christmas Day. No charge was made for the meal, but the costs were covered by generous donations.

Our Lady of Sorrows Hampers



Our Lady of Sorrows SVP Conference, Peckham, put together three hampers for their parishioners, following a 'one a day' pledge for Advent. The Conference gathered together on 18th December 2016 and assembled the items. The three hampers were taken to the Parish office to be presented to the Parishioners, two of whom had been recently bereaved.

Mini Vinnies at Holy Family Primary School, Leeds



The Mini Vinnies helped lead a whole school assembly to mark the end of the Pope's Jubilee Year of Mercy. There have been many merciful acts undertaken by the children during the year, these include visits to the Holy Door at Bolton Abbey, collections for the SVP and many other acts of kindness. It is important that these acts remain a focus and the Mini Vinnies plan a series of undertakings based on the messages of the Beatitudes in the coming year.

Brass Band & Football put a smile on many!



The St Joan of Arc SVP Conference, Highbury thought up an ingenious way to raise funds for the Conference. A brass band, the Corsica Band, played in SVP member Nuala's front garden before the Arsenal v Burnley match in December. They raised £260 for the St Joan of Arc SVP as well as putting a smile on the faces of the match goers, playing tunes such as Colonel Bogey, Nellie the Elephant and Chatanuga Chu Chu.

Christmas Hampers St Alban's SVP Macclesfield

A big thank you to all the SVP members from St Alban's Church, Macclesfield, who helped purchase, collect and pack 80 Christmas Hampers for both families in need at St Alban's School, and for some of the people they visited during the year.



Marking 400 years of Vincentian Charism



As part of celebrations to mark the 400th anniversary of the birth of the Vincentian Charism, the Vincentian family organisation AIC held an event at St George's, Southwark Cathedral on Saturday 25th February. The event was a huge success with approximately 250 people from all branches of the Vincentian Family in attendance, and feedback that it was a wonderful and joyous occasion. Archbishop Peter Smith, assisted by several priests, celebrated Mass while SVP spiritual director, Fr Paul Roche CM gave a far-ranging homily and Julius Nkafu a talk on social justice which perfectly reflected the theme of the 400th Anniversary 'Welcome the Stranger'. Members of the SVP were in attendance, and will host their own Mass and celebration at Liverpool Cathedral on Saturday 24th June.

Congratulations David!

David Staines regularly attends the Parish Coffee Morning at St Teresa's Beaconsfield. He is well known in the town and has connections with other Beaconsfield church groups. He chose to celebrate his 70th birthday in St Teresa's Parish Centre and a party was hosted by the SVP. Many of his friends from the town attended and an enjoyable time was had by all.



International Association of Charities



Dee Mansi of the AIC

In common with other members of the Vincentian family, the origins of the AIC (International Association of Charities) lie in a specific call to provide spiritual and material help to those most in need. The oldest branch of the Vincentian Family, its 53 national associations and 5,100 groups in Africa, Latin America, Asia, Europe and the Middle East bring together 150,000 women volunteers.

During Mass one Sunday in 1617, St Vincent called on his parishioners to help a sick family that needed urgent help. That same afternoon, over 50 women responded, visiting the family and bringing them what they needed. Three days later, marvelling at such generosity and with a passion to make it more effective and long-lasting, St Vincent led a first group of women to form a "Confraternity of Charity" to provide spiritual and material help to those most in need. During his lifetime, the charities quickly spread throughout France and onwards to Italy and Poland, laying the foundations for the IAC's international presence and influence today.

Formerly called "Ladies of Charity", the AIC now comprises an international women's network spanning four continents. Its aim is to be a transforming presence of Christian inspiration in society and to fight all forms of poverty and exclusion.

It works mainly, though not exclusively with women, through projects in which the beneficiaries are fully involved. It also collaborates at global level, participating in networks and contributing to public policy and civil society programmes, working with others to help build a fairer world.

In the UK there are 53 members at branches in Abbeywood, Bexley, Mill Hill, Darlington, Glasgow and Peckham and new members are being recruited in other parts of the country. Members work with a wide range of vulnerable women and men, promoting social inclusion and community enrichment.

Current projects support and involve people with hearing and sight impairment, the homeless, prisoners, housebound elderly people, the bereaved and people in debt. In the UK it lobbies on poverty related issues, promotes Fair Trade campaigns, supports a children's project in Ukraine, the Daughters of Charity's Kenyan Missions, a health project in Uganda and various UK home missions.

“It's hard to believe, but in some countries our members are still forced to meet in secret due to paternalistic attitudes but thankfully this is gradually changing.”

Dee Mansi, AIC UK President

“While our work may take place in many corners of the world and in very different circumstances, we are united by our shared spirituality, history and culture and we treasure our solidarity and strong bonds of friendship”.

As she begins her third and final two-year term as President, Dee is optimistic about the future. “Pope Francis is a wonderful Pope for all Vincentians. He affirms and encourages us by championing the church of the poor and in calling the world to urgent action on behalf of those on the margins of society, wherever they may be. Perhaps this is one reason why increasing numbers of young people are joining us and are discovering that giving of yourself in the service of others is a life-enhancing and transformative experience for all involved. It seems our message is not only timeless but has an enduring appeal for all generations. We have achieved so much in our first 400 years, who knows what we can do in the next 400!”

Visit <http://www.aic-international.org/en/> and <http://famvin400.info>

Cardinal Vincent Nichols

Cardinal Vincent Nichols, patron of the SVP, has clear views on what motivates the SVP's 10,000 members to carry out their work with people who are vulnerable.



“Life comes to every single one of us as a gift. We don’t earn our existence, it’s a gift. And it is best lived as a gift to be given back. There’s in that sense a grammar within human nature, of gift. And I think that’s why people for most part want to help,” the Cardinal says.

He speaks specifically of the generosity that comes into this work: “I think that for those who have faith in God as a source of life, of faith in God as a source of our generosity, there’s a motivation which runs very deeply. But we have no monopoly on generosity. People are generous from every walk of life.”

While the Cardinal feels that generosity can be drawn from sources beyond the Christian path he does believe that there are unique qualities belonging to the Christian vocation of charity. He explains: “What I think is unique about Christian charities is the way in which they can make explicit and therefore deepen the vision of the human person and the vision to serve that person. For instance, why do we help each other, why do we respect each other, why do we tolerate each other? Secular norms tell us that tolerance, mutual respect and rights of each other are very important. But that secular framework is not so good at answering the question, ‘why?’ Is it because the State bestows rights on a person? No. These rights are innate to every person. Why are they innate? Because there is a transcendent quality, there is a mystery at the heart of every person. In the eyes of faith that comes into sharp focus: This is a child of God.

“I treasure the SVP because they have a Vincentian tradition and that is strong in its identification with Christ, seeing the person

of Christ our Blessed Lord in the face of the person of the poor. And if you think you are serving your Lord in the poor then you are on your toes. You want to do it very well, and I think that’s what SVP members seek to do.”

SVP members are “Missionary Disciples”. The Cardinal reflects on this: “By being a ‘disciple’ we conform ourselves to Christ. We want to see the fullness of my humanity that is given to me and expressed through the person of Jesus, and through my discipleship with Him I find my human fulfilment interlocking with the divine life of God.

“Discipleship in that sense paradoxically is a search for fulfilment. But it is also “missionary discipleship”, and that describes its character. It is missionary because it reaches out. And it is missionary when it gets to the peripheries, the edges. That is where we find in the most dramatic way the person of Jesus who we want to serve. By peripheries he means all those on the edge.

You can be on the edge for all sorts of reasons, economically, socially, psychologically, in your health, all sorts of ways. He means the most vulnerable. He is saying that it is those on the edge where Christ chooses to be because that is what he did in his life. People on the margins include those who are lonely and isolated. Cardinal Nichols highly values and endorses the work of befriending the lonely that the SVP does. “The process of rebuilding a network of friendship is the counterpoint to loneliness. If you can rebuild some context that can become friendship that’s the most important thing.”



CEO's Message

Seeking Transformation

“Be transformed by the renewing of your mind” *Romans 12:2*

Sometimes everything is a struggle, not just for those the Society seeks to help, but for those engaged in its work, members, staff and volunteers too. Our struggles come in many different forms: bereavement, depression and anxiety, sickness, crisis of faith, loneliness and so on. Often we do not know what the people we deal with daily are carrying upon their shoulders and in their hearts. All we can know for certain is that each and every one of us is human and therefore fragile.

On top of life's imponderables we then add the stresses and burdens that come with life in the SVP. Today I would list DBS, data protection, banking, increasing costs and stricter fund raising legislation and tomorrow something else will come along.

We often talk about the wider Vincentian family, the collection of Vincentian organisations who share St Vincent's charism for love and service of the poor. The SVP is a family too, members, staff and volunteers who share a common vision and who want to help others. Each plays their part, sometimes well, sometimes not so well, but for the most part in good faith. All families have their moments of course.

I try to remind myself of this when I hear that treasurers have been ringing the Finance team in Bradford and accusing them of “stealing” their money or that Conference and Councils who don't know how to spend their legacies would rather give the funds to another charity than benefit a project or Central Council outside of their area, or Heaven forbid, help with central costs.

I love the SVP, I love what it does, and I feel privileged to meet the vast majority of members and staff and volunteers who inspire me with their passion and their work. However parochialism, negativity and sometimes downright unpleasantness can overshadow this for a moment. I try to start each day afresh, to start again, to fix what needs fixing and to move on. I, nor the Trustees, can change the legal, economic or political environment in which the Society operates. All we can do is try to equip the charity so that it can flourish in spite of it all.

We seek to transform the lives of others but in order to do this sometimes we too need a bit of transformation, in ourselves, our conference, our council or our project or office.

Elizabeth Palmer, CEO

There is a light that will never go out...

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

Heidi Cors - long serving member and President of Camden and Islington District Council.

Alice (Zsa Zsa) Margaret Eames - active member in London and more recently of the Most Holy Trinity Conference, Newquay, Cornwall.

Ellen Lane - long serving member of the St. Mary's Conference, Poole, Dorset.

John Lannin - member of the Bewdley Conference, in the parish of St Wulstan and St Thomas of Canterbury Worcestershire, and former Treasurer of the Worcester District.

Dennis Lloyd - past member of St Aidan's Conference, Little Chalfont, Buckinghamshire.

Peter Martelli - dedicated member and Treasurer of the Bodmin Conference (St Mary & St Petroc).

Mark McNicholas - former member and Treasurer of St Margaret Ward, Sale, Shrewsbury CC.

Michael Mead - founder member and long term Treasurer and President of St. Michael's Conference, Menevia CC.

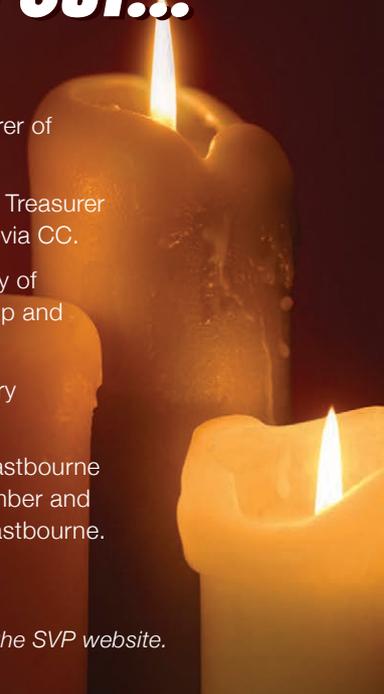
Sue Sarsfield - long standing member, Secretary of Bedford District Council, and President of St Philip and St James Conference in Bedford.

Doris Swinton - Secretary of Blessed John Henry Newman Conference, Latchford, Warrington.

Patrick Warwick - longstanding Treasurer of Eastbourne and Hastings District Council and previously member and Treasurer of Our Lady of Ransom Conference, Eastbourne.

May they rest in peace.

Where provided, full obituaries will be displayed on the SVP website.



Inspiration Corner

We end your Vincentian reading with a few quotes from our founder Blessed Frédéric Ozanam:

It is our vocation to set people's hearts ablaze, to do what the Son of God did, who came to light a fire on earth in order to set it ablaze with His love.

I am now completely convinced that when one does a deed of charity one need not worry about where the money will come from: it will always come.

Sons of Vincent de Paul, let us learn of Him to forget ourselves, to devote ourselves to the service of God and the good of men. Let us learn of Him that holy preference which shows most love to those who suffer most.



Yours must be a work of love, of kindness, you must give your time, your talents, yourselves. The poor person is a unique person of God's fashioning with an inalienable right to respect. You must not be content with tiding the poor over the poverty crisis; You must study their condition and the injustices which brought about such poverty, with the aim of a long term improvement.

Sources of Funding:

CHAS Catholic Housing Aid Society (West London)

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

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

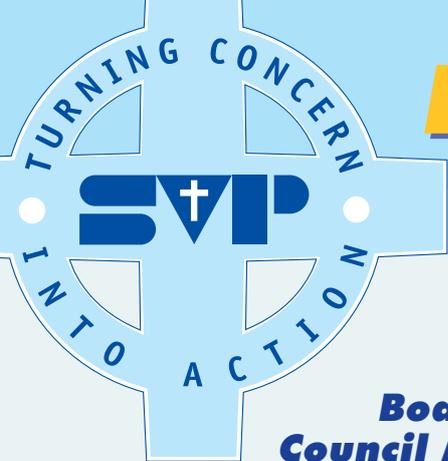
David Young's Charity

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, 9 Larcom Street, Walworth, London SE17 1RX. Visit the David Young's Charity website www.davidyoungscharity.co.uk or email trustees@davidyoungscharity.co.uk

Registered Charity Number 238877



Notice Board

2017 Board & National Council Meeting Dates

Board Meetings

5th July - London National Office

14th September - London National Office

27th & 28th October - Hinsley Hall (*Residential*)

24th November - Hinsley Hall (*Before National Council*)

National Council Meetings

22nd June - Liverpool (*Day before National Meeting*)

24th - 25th November - Hinsley Hall (*Residential*)

National Meeting

23rd & 24th June 2017 - Liverpool

Council General International Meeting

14th - 18th June - Paris

Inviting content contributions for VC Autumn Edition 2017

Next deadline for sending news and information for VC Autumn Edition 2017 is 17th July 2017. Letters and articles for inclusion in the magazine should be submitted to: 9 Larcom Street, Walworth, London, SE17 1RX or email anitab@svp.org.uk

Advertise with us Reach more than 10,000 UK readers!

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

Editorial Policy

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

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Executive Editor Elizabeth Palmer
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Letters and articles for inclusion in the magazine should preferably be emailed to anitab@svp.org.uk or submitted to: 9 Larcom Street, Walworth, London SE17 1RX.

Visit our website: www.svp.org.uk
Find us on Facebook and 'like' the SVP page: www.facebook.com/svpenglandandwales

About the SVP

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

The Society is a lay organisation initially formed in Paris in 1833 by Blessed Frédéric Ozanam and his companions, and active in England & Wales since 1844.

Placed under the Patronage of St Vincent de Paul, it is inspired by his thinking and works. It seeks, in the spirit of justice and charity, to help those who are suffering poverty in whatever form. Works include visiting the lonely, soup runs, food banks, furniture shops and charity shops in areas of deprivation, visiting the sick, giving grants to those in need, debt counselling, and assisting refugees and asylum seekers.

Last year SVP members made nearly 500,000 visits to families and individuals in need. Working face to face with those we seek to help, SVP members develop lasting relationships with those they serve, and gain a rare insight into the lives of those people they help.

