

# Vincentian Concern

St. Vincent de Paul Society (England and Wales)  
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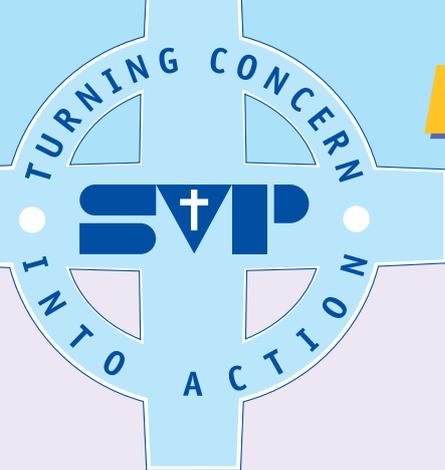
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## A DAY IN MY SHOES

MINI VINNIES CAMPAIGN FOR THE HOMELESS PAGE 16



## Love One Another as I Have Loved You



I write this on the Feast of the Ascension. At the Last Supper, Christ gives the Apostles a new commandment, "love one another, as I have loved you".

**Recent Sunday Mass readings reflect on the uncertainty the apostles felt. Just before ascending into heaven Christ tells them to stay in Jerusalem until they are "clothed with the power from on high". The Gospel tells us they returned to Jerusalem "full of joy".**

A few days later the Holy Spirit descends on them, inspiring them to travel far and wide, preaching the Good News. Not everything was perfect. There were arguments, most notably between Peter and Paul. Peter felt that Christ's message was directed at the Jews, whereas Paul recognised Christ's message was for the whole world.

This somehow reflects our lives today. We should preach the Good News but sometimes disagreements divide us, both as a Church and as a Society. In June there is a six yearly plenary meeting of the Society in Rome to elect a new President General, to consider proposed changes in procedures regarding eligible candidates for presidency and to formalise our relationship with the Vatican. While we treasure our independence as a lay organisation, we have deferred to ecclesiastical authority on matters of faith and morals. Pope Benedict's "Motu Proprio" requires all Bishops to ensure Catholic Charities act in complete accordance with Church teaching. The Vatican understands the Society's dilemma as an international body and recognises the Society's right "to decide its work (and how it is undertaken), the management of its projects and its choice of Officers, organisational structures and the formation of its members and Officers. It has the sole right to manage and distribute its funds and assets." Occasionally disputes do arise in some parts of the world, but the ultimate decision will reside with Cor Unum, the Pope's committee on Charities.

Every three years members visit the countries with which we are twinned. In January, four members visited India. Stephen Hogg's report in the last edition detailed our visit to Kerala and Tamil Nadu, and Terry Brown and Marie Branch's report from the northern states is in this edition. The word that constantly comes to mind is "inspiring". The Society and indeed the Church, especially in Southern India, is dynamic. We saw the Church expanding, congregations spilling over to the street outside and the Society growing considerably. The Indian Society has over 7,000 Conferences, and almost 66,000 full members making it the world's second largest National Council, about half of which is in Kerala. Twinnage has played a significant role in this expansion and our Indian members are most grateful for the money sent to enable them to carry out this work.

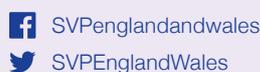
Progress in this country is less uniform, but we've had great success in starting new Conferences, not least in Southwark where over a dozen new Conferences have sprung up in a part of London where the SVP had all but disappeared. After years of decline in which it neared going into abeyance Wrexham has increased its membership by 33%. Here in Leeds CC we are seeing a string of new Conferences. Gaining new membership requires much effort. Waiting isn't an option; we have to pray then go out and do something about it, requiring good energetic leaders; let's use our God given talents to find new members, grow our membership, enabling us to bring Christ's love and hope to lonely people and desperate families. In Christ's name I ask you to "love one another as I have loved you", making this Year of Mercy a special year, especially for those with needs.

*Adrian Abel, National President*

### Inside this Issue

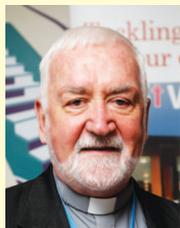
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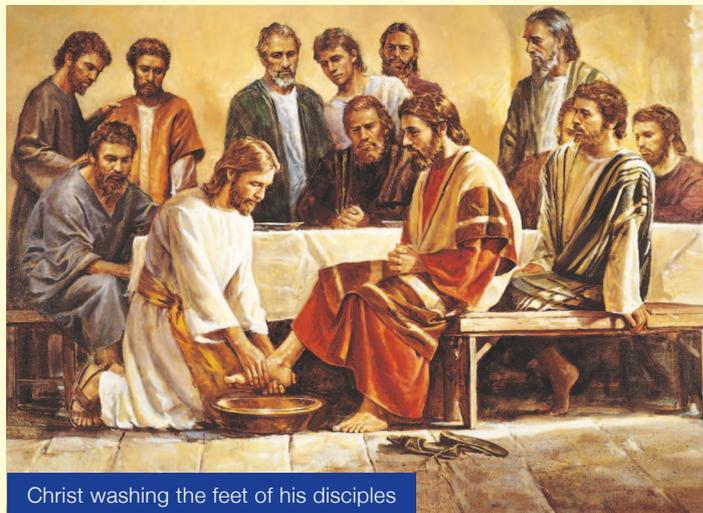
## To know, love and serve God



The Christian meaning of life has often been described as a matter of knowing, loving and serving God in this life, and so being happy with him in the next! Does such thinking fit into the life of the average SVP member? Let's just see how it might.

For St. Vincent it is not a matter of doing good to others in the hope that God will then reward us – it is much more basic. For Vincent everything and everyone has been changed by God becoming man – becoming a human being just as each of us is. Everyone, be they believer or non-believer is not only made in the image and likeness of God, but in some marvellous way shares in the life of God. This means that when we serve others especially those who are poor and neglected, we are actually loving and serving God.

How different this makes a SVP member compare to someone who cares for others because they are being paid to do so, or because they feel under an obligation to help.



Christ washing the feet of his disciples

For a Vincentian, people in need are not a nuisance to be avoided, not a case or a problem – they are, like ourselves, children of God, who deserve to be respected and loved.

*Paul C Roche CM.*

## The International Rule: Unfolding the Flower

In 1997, Amin de Tarrazi, who served as President General for twelve years, said in a private conversation,

*“What the Society really needs is a Rule which explains our spirituality much more fully”*

There then followed a process of revising the Rule while staying true to the precious original charism bequeathed to us. One of the previous General Principles said “(the Society) is inspired by St. Vincent’s thinking and his works” and mentions Frédéric Ozanam by name as the only founder. We knew that for true renewal of the Church and of any Society within the Church, we had to pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit: “He will lead you to the complete truth” (Jn 16:13). So despite our frailty, we tried to get into a state of “inner listening”. It gradually dawned on us that just knowing we were inspired by the spirituality of St Vincent and Blessed Frédéric was not very helpful. Why not explain the essence of their spirituality? So there it is, in 2.4 and 2.5, including the five essential virtues.

There are many examples of such a “gradual dawning”. We eventually referred to this process as “unfolding the flower” of the original charism. We realised that this is just how spiritual insights often emerge – like seeds becoming flowers. When there is also a sense of joy and peace and we feel more inspired to follow our Vincentian vocation, then we can be sure the Holy Spirit has been at work – giving us both spiritual light and spiritual energy. The new Rule is still a modest offering, with only seven chapters and just 55 paragraphs, but many members have found in it beautiful and inspiring phrases, enabling them to see deeper into our vocation and to become more committed to help those in need with a semblance of the compassion and sensitivity of Christ himself.



*David Williams, President of Council  
General's Rule & Statutes Commission*



# Conference Spotlight

## Booming Membership at St Laurence Conference!

St Laurence Conference, Cambridge recently doubled its membership. Why the success? What led to this sudden boom? Below are the thoughts of two new members of the Conference about why they joined.

**Catherine's view:** I was involved for many years leading the music at the 9.30 Mass and encouraging the community to sing about loving God and one another. I have since felt the urge to do something more personal and practical to help people.

I was visiting my elderly parents in Kent and was aware that many older people can no longer get out much or join in activities and they might like to be visited and feel part of the parish. I already had a general idea about the SVP: helping people and being "a good thing".

Joining the SVP involved getting references and completing several short forms - handled efficiently by parish officers. Conference meetings give me the opportunity to talk to the other members and hear about the varied needs and people that the SVP supports. Now I spend an hour a week getting to know a 95 year old lady in a local care home.

**Liz's view:** I joined following a lectern appeal by the SVP one Sunday. It was about being part of a movement providing a friendly face to those who are struggling with life – whether lonely or housebound, in need of a fresh outlook on some difficulty, or simply being there for someone to listen patiently to their concerns. Being in the SVP involves regular meetings with other members, taking part in reflective prayer and supporting each other with the people we each visit. It's all about sharing knowledge in the pursuit of solving issues that those we visit are struggling with, in the hope of making their world a better place.

The enrolment process is simple: the main criterion is to want to help others with the grace of God. Following that, there are a couple of forms application for a DBS and an interview with the local Parish Priest, the SVP chair and other interested parties. And before you know it, you're in; looking at the challenges that others in our Parish are trying to manage and doing your best to smooth their path.

**Christine's view:** I am president at St. Laurence's, Cambridge. The increase from six to fourteen members is a real boost for us. We have been supported and encouraged by our parish priest, who occasionally refers potential beneficiaries to us and is happy for us to raise awareness and funds within the parish. We write regular articles for the quarterly parish magazine and address the congregation annually to explain who we are and what



we do. There are two annual parish collections for the SVP which is where the majority of our funds come from. Our membership is a mixture of male and female, working and retired parishioners; we meet in the early evening to accommodate both groups.

We took on a few high-demand beneficiaries and were able to respond quickly and positively; for example a family and a couple, both moving house at short notice. We enlisted (with permission) the help of other parishioners to assist with the move. Parishioners saw that the SVP wasn't just about visiting care homes, but we can offer practical help as well. Another beneficiary needed household items when her family was rehoused, just before Christmas, into a very empty house. After an appeal in the parish newsletter, the parish responded generously with more than we could have hoped for. People were delighted to be able to help in some way.

I believe that the increased awareness we have been able to generate recently has contributed significantly to the increase in our members, and consequently in the help we have been able to offer within our parish. It is hard work for a little while, but the rewards are there to be taken.

**If you would like your Conference to feature in a Spotlight article, please email [AnitaB@svp.org.uk](mailto:AnitaB@svp.org.uk)**

Increased awareness contributed the increase in members. Consider how you can raise awareness of the SVP in your parish: organise a Big Mile walk, hold a coffee morning, ask parishioners to help, include regular snippets about your work in the parish newsletter. And of course liaise closely with your parish priest.

# Specialised Conference Activity

## A Conference specialising in Dementia Befriending

**SVP member Sonia Lloyd, a doctor in Staffordshire, experienced first-hand the challenges of caring for a husband with dementia. These challenges such as emotional and physical stress, social isolation, and stigma around the condition motivated her to start up a sub group of her SVP Conference at St Joseph's and St Ethelreda's parish.**

The group has been running for the past two and half years, providing respite breaks for carers in the community, as well as visiting people with dementia in residential homes.

Since starting, the group of SVP Dementia Companions has helped dozens of people, enabling one carer to attend a Bible study class, giving another the chance for normal conversation and someone to share his problems with, allowing another carer to attend Sunday Mass with her grand daughter, and providing one lady with dementia an outlet for her spontaneous affection.

People with dementia can have memories and knowledge that are not immediately accessible. Pauline Moffatt, Conference Secretary, describes how when doing a visit "We usually just chat, but looking at photographs has often proved to be very good – photos of family or how things looked in the past. Sometimes we use an iPad to google old photos of places familiar to that person." One man the SVP Dementia Companions visited could play the mouth organ and took great delight in playing it for them when they asked. Pauline says: "It is really important to find out as much as you can about the people you are visiting."

The spirituality of people with dementia is something that is often neglected. The SVP Dementia Companions also visit people in residential homes where people are often more advanced in their journey, and volunteers learn quickly that dementia does not take away a person's essential relationship with God. Sonia says:

“ We often receive wonderful gifts from these people in care homes. The blessing of a smile, a hug, the twinkle of an eye, the sincere, no frills, no conditions emotional and spiritual communication. ”

Alert to the spiritual needs of people with the disease, St Joseph and St Ethelreda's SVP Dementia Companions take Communion to those who can still receive, and recite prayers like the Lord's Prayer which are well remembered even by people



with advanced dementia. The Companions will often sit with them, listen to Songs of Praise together or help them experience the emotional and spiritual comforts of being outdoors - the experience through the senses of the breeze, the melody of birdsong, seeing the green of Spring, and thus experiencing the wonder of God's creation, often anew.

Sonia's group gained the valuable support of their parish priest, who has helped them publicise the work of their Conference through lectern addresses and the parish newsletter.

Before becoming Dementia Companions, Sonia organised for members of her Conference to receive specialist training which was provided by the Alzheimer's Society and other local groups including Admiral Nurses (made up of dementia specialist community nurses) and a local Dementia Champion. E-learning resources are also important as are fact sheets provided by the Alzheimer's Society.

The Conference holds additional meetings for the Dementia Companions SVP group, which are run as any other Conference meeting. At the meetings, Dementia Champions and other local experts often attend to show a video or give a talk. Twice a year, the SVP Dementia Companions hold a seminar for other SVP members and interested parishioners in order to disseminate information. This is a good way of recruiting new members and advertising the service.

So successful has the St Joseph's and St Ethelreda's parish SVP Dementia Companions been that the group is now working with other parishes too.

For more information about SVP Dementia Companions please call Anita Boniface on **020 7703 3030** or email **AnitaB@svp.org.uk**



## Conference Guide to combatting Funeral Poverty

**This year, Pope Francis highlights the Corporal Works of Mercy. It's obvious how to alleviate hunger and thirst, welcome strangers, provide shelter or visit the sick and prisoners, but how do we "Bury the dead"?**

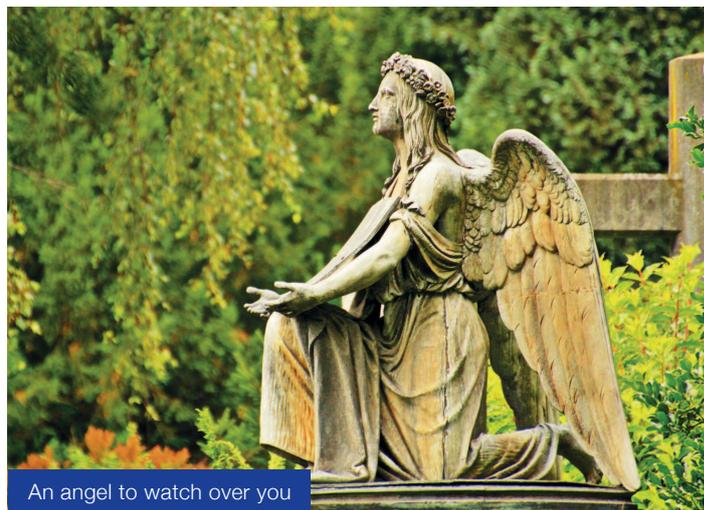
People on low incomes or benefits increasingly fall into serious and long-term debt following a death. These folk - often with little or no savings - are hit hardest, spending a much larger proportion of income on an unmanageable debt.

- **Funeral costs rose 300% from 1996 to 2015**
- **The Consumer Price Index and median earnings increased by only 150%**
- **Government Funeral Payments to eligible close relatives averaged £1375 in 2014-15, being far from adequate**
- **The basic 2015 funeral cost averaged £3693, for funeral director, cremation or burial, doctor and celebrant**
- **Add £2000 for a memorial, death and funeral notices, flowers, orders of service, cars and the wake**
- **Plus another £2433 for professional fees to administer the estate.**

One in six (17%) found funeral expense causing 'notable financial concerns'. Half borrowed money; 14% sold belongings; 17% entered payment plans; 41% drew upon savings. Many want to organise funerals quickly, making decisions in the early stages of grief with little knowledge of options and wanting a "good send off", probably just going along with the funeral director's ideas.

Churches perform almost half of English funerals: knowledgeable clergy and befrienders could talk about affordable funerals and alternative credit options. In 2015 Church Action on Poverty ("CAP") called upon churches to tackle funeral poverty and help relatives avoid debt. Some Quakers and Anglicans have investigated this, and we can learn from them. The Diocese of Lichfield has produced useful material to help vicars talk about costs and the ready availability of loans from local Credit Unions. However, this resource is rarely used because of embarrassment at switching conversation from bereavement ministry towards potentially intrusive discussion of finances. (My own parish priest dislikes discussing funeral payments to musicians, so the funeral director applies the local Anglican tariff!)

SVP Conferences work with priests to visit and accompany those in material and spiritual need, and many discover financial problems caused by death. Also, they see others at risk of falling into this trap and are well placed to help people find solutions when the sad day comes. The SVP tradition of visits to individuals and families, to the sick at home, in hospitals, hospices or residential homes, provides occasions to talk about



An angel to watch over you

money. SVP members are familiar friends, welcomed for a cup of tea and a chat as people who care and will offer good support.

### Some ideas...

- **Shop around for affordable and dignified 'Simple Funeral' options**
- **Remind people that cremation is usually cheaper than burial**
- **Look into innovations, like renting a coffin for use prior to cremation**
- **Seek sources of finance (some credit unions provide loans, paid directly to funeral directors with no up-front fees, and repayments spread over 60 months)**
- **Get to know what options local undertakers offer.**

Funeral directors gain business through their local reputation. In 2014, CAP and others launched the 'Funeral Poverty Alliance', leading to the 'Fair Funerals Pledge', asking funeral directors to commit to:

- **Recognising that funerals can be expensive and many people struggle with the cost.**
- **Making their most affordable funeral package visible to the public, including third party costs.**
- **Charging clear prices for goods and services so that people know what they're buying.**
- **Communicating prices in initial conversations and prominently displaying full price lists.**

Have you seen this pledge? Does your Conference help in these ways? The Social Justice Committee will be pleased to help share practical experiences.

*Phil Kerton, SVP Social Justice Committee Member*

## A staff perspective: Eye witness accounts from Lesbos

Refugees have been prominent in the media over the past year and many SVP members will have been actively supporting refugees and migrants through prayer, including the prayer vigil, by signing the SVP petition on detention rights, and through practical work and friendship.

**The SVP Social Justice Committee has also been focusing on how refugees can remain at the forefront of members' attention and is in the process of highlighting other charity petitions and campaigns on refugees and migrants which members can support.**

As many members will know, each encounter with a refugee or asylum seeker will be unique and individual. One powerful illustration of this can be seen through the eyewitness account of former SVP membership development officer, Kester Ratcliff. Kester left the SVP earlier this year to return to the Greek island of Lesbos where he has been volunteering in the many and varied rescue attempts to save desperate and vulnerable refugees fleeing from danger in their home countries.

Guardian journalist Laura Padoan described Lesbos as an island where "two worlds are colliding. Every day this summer, holidaymakers are confronted with the fallout from bloody civil wars as sunrise brings boatloads of refugees to the beaches of Europe." Kester experienced several refugee landings first hand and writes about these in his blog. He describes a young man fleeing Syria with his eight year old sister. The man, just 20 years old, fainted when he reached the harbour side. Kester took his hand as the young man regained consciousness, and the gratitude of this young man to be safe, to be told his sister was safe, and to receive some fragment of care was extremely moving. Kester writes "I don't believe what I'm doing should be seen as something special, this is just a basic human duty."

In his second week, Kester was carrying out a regular morning patrol of the remote Lagkada beach when he spotted with binoculars about ten young men at the far end of the beach.



Flimsy life jackets and floats which refugees are dependent on



Many generations find themselves as refugees

His group of volunteers ran towards the men and eventually spotted 16 people - parents and a few grandmas with toddlers and babies in their arms - struggling along slippery wet algae covered rocks at the base of the cliffs. Kester writes: "We eventually found a path down to them and helped carry their babies up a very steep waterfall to the path. At the top of the cliff, the mother of the baby I was carrying gestured for her baby back and gave me her toddler to carry instead - who was much heavier!" Kester realised the toddler had been sedated - the smugglers often insist on drugging babies to reduce the risk of them crying and attracting the attention of the coast guard. However even worse was that this baby had been given an overdose - he was breathing very shallowly and slowly and couldn't stand up on his own.

Kester also remembers an 80 year old Afghan woman who landed in a crowded boat near a lighthouse on the island, and was having to wait in the cold to be given a foil blanket and driven to refuge. The woman clutched two carrier bags - her only remaining possessions in the world. These experiences, from the grateful 20 year old Syrian man, to the sedated toddler, to the 80 year old Afghan woman, stripped of nearly all her possessions, are just a handful of the people that Kester has met during his volunteering.

You can read more on his blog at: <https://silenceofeternity.wordpress.com/2016/02/28/ten-personal-encounters-with-refugees-on-lesvos/>



## Overview of CSPs by K

In the last edition of Vincentian Concern I updated you with some changes over the past 12 months. I am delighted to see the local staff supporting our shops, furniture stores and other community support projects. I am delighted to see the development of our CSPs. We are also setting up new local oversight groups to ensure we are de

## Relocations and Re-fits: Back to Basics in the North

Some say its “grim up north”, well I can only see sunshine and renewed energy this month. The northwest CSP team comprising of Mike Clark, Area Manager for Greater Manchester, and newly appointed Honora Crisp, Area Manager for North Wales, Merseyside and the Wirral have joined Bev Whittaker in getting “back to basics” in our community shops and furniture stores across the region.

Working with our dedicated and long serving members, we are developing a new growth strategy for the northwest in line with the CSP plan for growth over the next couple of years. We certainly want to grow and develop more shops in areas of need and are working with the local oversight groups to turn this plan into action. But before we do that we are getting our hands dirty with some much needed spring cleaning and, in some cases, refitting our existing shops.

The Northern Moor shop in Wythenshawe recently saw a complete refit with staff and volunteers getting stuck in over 3 days to give the place a

new look. Whilst re-fitting the shop, many passers by came in anxiously to check that we were not closing down, and were assured when they saw the improvements and that it was back in business on the Monday. We saw an increase in our customers in the first week and hope it continues. With the support of our local members we will continue to work to enhance the work that our local projects do. We are also starting to work more closely with Furniture depots, to ensure stock is accessible and can be targeted and supplied to the shops and to those who need it when the need arises.

We want to develop individual action plans for each of the shops with our members, so we can ensure we have the right products, price, promotions and rotation going on to maximise what the shops can do, but importantly without losing the sense of Vincentian ethos and community spirit. There are still the coffee mornings, “chit chat Tuesdays” and just taking the time out to talk and smile at our customers, which always goes a long way. So its not that grim up north after all.

## A New Home for St Vincent's Support Centre



St Vincent's Moving Day

After 6 years of being located on York Road in Leeds, St Vincent's Support Centre has moved to a new home. Within an easy walk of our last location, the centre is still based within the community that needs us in East Leeds and, in fact, we are back in the same building that was home many years ago - The Curtis Building on Berking Avenue.

The move was unexpected so this has brought its challenges but also a great deal of opportunity. The new place is all on one level which means our visitors have much more accessibility to the services and also we

have been able to shape the space into what will work for us - it was previously an unused warehouse – which has enabled us to make sure that our counselling and debt advice rooms have their own space alongside class rooms, an IT suite and meeting rooms. The move has given us the chance to expand our shop and café too. In the moving period, we have been so lucky to receive help from many of our friends, volunteers and other SVP teams including East Leeds Lions biking club, Marks and Spencer's who provided equipment and a huge team of people to help us paint the shop, St Jude's, Northern Rail, and Ring Automotive to name a few. We have also received some very kind donations from local Conferences which will help us shape the building into a really special place. It is still a work in progress - as the photographs show - but our services have kept going with classes and support services being delivered at outreach locations and the team being really flexible about working arrangements. It's been a juggle but it's also been good for team building and realising just how ingenious we can be when we need to! On the 14th June Bishop Marcus Stock is due to officially open the Centre, along with the Lord Mayor of Leeds and many of our friends and supporters.



# Community Support Projects

## Kate Nightingale, Deputy CEO

hs. In particular there was a new regional focus and with an intention to ensure we have much better coverage of  
ghted that we have now completed recruitment and all our area managers are in place to support the growth and  
developing a local vision for the future and we have a growth plan which identifies where we want to develop next.

## From Market Street to Sunbridge Road via Rees Way!

**We opened our long awaited new retail shop in Bradford (Sunbridge Road) in May and we are also planning to open a new large Community Shop in Broadfield, Crawley.**

18 months ago, after confirmation that the Market Street shop would be closing its doors to make way for The Broadway, Bradford, we started our long and winding journey to find a new shop. With so many different factors and options, we found the perfect location, 3 doors down from the new Sunbridgewells ([www.sunbridgewells.com](http://www.sunbridgewells.com)) on Sunbridge Road. With Bradford on the up and up and a resurgence in retro and vintage shops opening, we started the careful planning of our new flagship shop, with a different feel and twist on the traditional SVP shop. Red tape, planning permission, listed buildings and licencing aside, Rees Way



Sunny Sunbridge Road

became our base for our new operation. Along the way, we've forged links with other organisations, notably, Marks & Spencer, who generously donated a plethora of display items, mannequins, racking, pedestals and bags. Rees Way suddenly became a hoarder's paradise, bursting at the seams, ready to migrate to Sunbridge Road. With a sigh of relief, on Friday 6th May, the keys finally became ours. Since then, every waking minute has been dedicated to knocking down walls, pulling up and putting down carpet, painting and wallpapering the inside of wardrobes for unique displays!



Lovely Sunbridge display

Everyone from volunteers to senior managers have contributed towards Sunbridge Road in some shape or form, and as you can see from the pictures, we have made excellent progress, ready for the official opening by Bishop Marcus Stock, on Tuesday, 14th June, when we will be welcoming many guests and shoppers. At the heart of the shop we are still helping people locally, but the different feel, will hopefully bring in an even more diverse group of people and expose them to the SVP ethos and raise much needed funds for our wonderful charity.

*David Hyman-Schofield, Shop Manager, Sunbridge Road, Bradford*

## Volunteer Spotlight: Nick

**We have some super volunteers who are extremely important to CSPs. Here's a Volunteer Spotlight on one of our willing and able volunteers who has also gained greatly through the SVP, Nick.**

Nick has been volunteering at the SVP's Sheffield Furniture store for over ten years. He describes how he began drinking as a 9 year old, and by the time he reached his twenties he was an alcoholic. His doctor gave him three months to live. Nick entered rehab for drugs and alcohol and after completing his course was assigned a council flat. He says that when he emerged from rehab his "nerves and condition were still very bad and (he) was a bit of a loner." His new flat was completely unfurnished and without any financial resource, he had no means of buying himself a sofa or a bed.

Step in SVP. The Sheffield furniture store lent a helping hand, furnishing his flat and transforming Nick's life more than he could ever have dreamed. He felt that he wanted to "give something back" and once he

had settled into his flat he began volunteering at the furniture store. For the past few years he has spent two to three days a week making up packs of cutlery, bedding, and emergency supplies for people like him, who have nothing to live with at home. He loads the vans and goes out on the morning deliveries.

Being a loner hasn't stopped him making friends at Sheffield furniture store. He says that often when he's having a cigarette break he will chat to people on the street, and he can relate to their experiences. His own past suffering has given him compassion and understanding. Nick says: "You're giving people a start in life. It's nice to know that there are people around who you make a difference to. The smile on their face when you go in their house – the furniture is second hand but it's a starting place."

He says he likes volunteering because "I'm helping others. When you know what other people are going through you give them hope they can get through it like I did".



# Recruitment

## How a higher profile can attract Members...

There is proof that having a higher profile can pay dividends in terms of attracting new members to the SVP and even starting new Conferences. But does drawing attention to ourselves go against the grain for a Society noted for its modesty and discretion?

**Famously described by the Catholic Herald as “the Catholic church’s best-kept secret,” the SVP is now working hard at having a more prominent public image. But is it worth it? Two recent examples from Southwark Central Council prove the value of having a higher profile.**

“A few months ago we conducted a major appeal at St George’s Cathedral in Southwark to start a new Conference,” recalls Kieran Knights, Membership Support & Development Manager at National Office. “It was very successful – we had a lot of interest. But then a few days later I took a phone call from someone who was interested in joining the SVP at the Cathedral. ‘Did you see the appeal?’ I asked. ‘What appeal?’ was the deflating response. ‘I’ve been away but I saw your article in The Universe’.”

The SVP’s Communications Department had negotiated an item in the weekly Catholic newspaper about joining the SVP as a response to the Year of the Mercy.

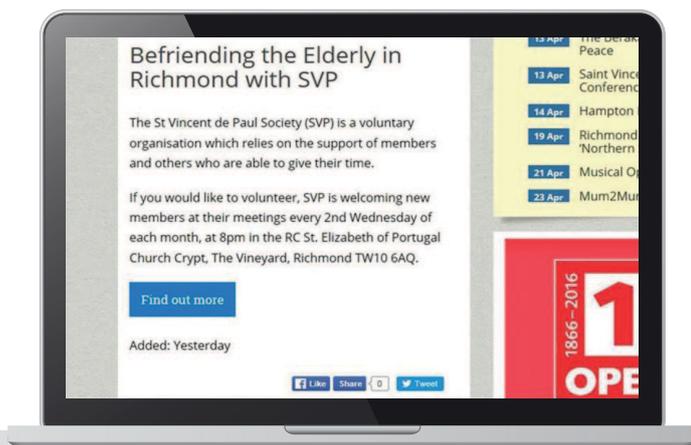
“Despite our lectern addresses, posters and leaflets, for at least one parishioner it was the article in The Universe that attracted them to join us,” Kieran points out.

The same thing happened again soon after when the Southwark diocesan newspaper, The Pilgrim, published a double-page feature about the SVP. “We received an email a few days later from a group of parishioners in Gravesend, Kent, who had been inspired by the article to want to start a new Conference,” Kieran reveals. “It shows how having a higher profile can really be worthwhile.”

But raising the SVP’s profile is not just confined to using the press. Conferences themselves can benefit from promoting themselves within their parishes and beyond. For example, having posters and information displayed on the parish noticeboard, providing regular SVP news items for the parish bulletin, having leaflets available for parishioners to pick up, hosting fundraising events in the parish hall, and trying to involve the parish in SVP activities such as food collections for the local foodbank, can all help give a Conference a more prominent role in parish life. The SVP Conference at Richmond in Surrey went a step further, contributing a news item to the local borough council website, promoting volunteering with the Society and including a link to the SVP website. Under the heading “Befriending the elderly in Richmond with SVP”, the piece invited local people interested in becoming members to come along to a meeting at the church. Perhaps this approach could be taken further still through use of local newspapers, radio stations and social media. However, does this all conflict with the Society’s low-key traditions?

“Often the need to respect the confidentiality of our beneficiaries has meant that SVP Conferences have been operating in so discreet and unobtrusive a way that many parishioners haven’t realised they existed,” Kieran observes. “In addition, most members are modest about their work and feel disinclined to blow their own trumpets.

“However, if people don’t know we exist or, worse, view us as mysterious and secretive, how do we ever expect to attract more members?”



### What do YOU think?

Should the SVP be doing more to raise our profile or is a more low-key approach preferable? Is there anything you’ve done to promote your Conference?

Let us know by emailing [membership@svp.org.uk](mailto:membership@svp.org.uk) or by writing to Membership, SVP National Office, 9 Larcom Street, London SE17 1RX. **Please mark your letters or emails: “Profile Debate”.**

Pictured left: Richmond Conference Raising the profile

## New Fact Sheets to Solve Queries

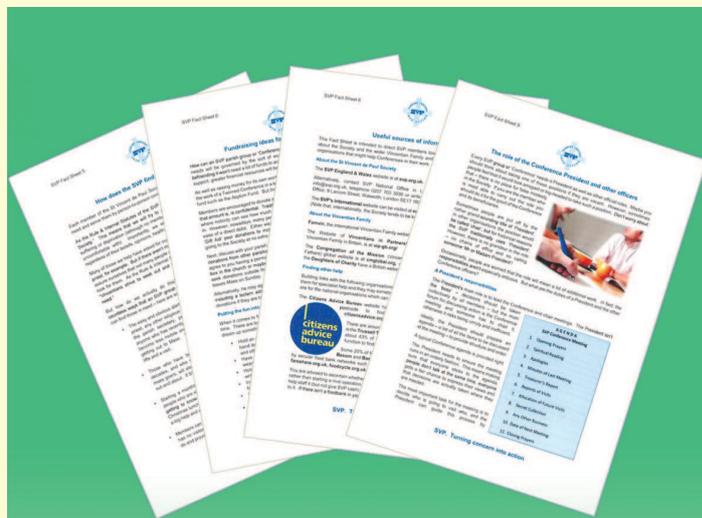
A number of new Fact Sheets have been launched by Membership Development, bringing the total number in the series to nine.

Designed to answer many of the questions asked by new and prospective members or new Conferences, much of the useful information they contain is likely to be of interest to all members.

The one-page sheets cover the following topics:

- **Fact Sheet 1 - Volunteering with the SVP**
- **Fact Sheet 2 - How to start an SVP Conference**
- **Fact Sheet 3 - How to start an SVP 1833 Conference for Young Adults**
- **Fact Sheet 4 - Starting SVP groups for Children and Young People**
- **Fact Sheet 5 - How does the SVP find the people it helps?**
- **Fact Sheet 6 - Fundraising ideas for an SVP Conference**
- **Fact Sheet 7 - Gaining the support of a Parish Priest for a new Conference**
- **Fact Sheet 8 - Useful sources of information**
- **Fact Sheet 9 - The role of the Conference President and other officers**

Do you have any other ideas for Fact Sheets? Email your suggestions to [membership@svp.org.uk](mailto:membership@svp.org.uk)



The new Fact Sheets can be downloaded from the Recruitment Section of the website in the Members' Area:  
[www.svp.org.uk/recruitment](http://www.svp.org.uk/recruitment)

## Recruitment: Have you signed up yet?

Spread the Word, our brand new recruitment e-bulletin, is now being distributed each month. Have you registered to receive it yet?

Intended for Conference Presidents, recruiters and anyone interested in attracting more members to the SVP, the monthly bulletin carries recruitment news, tips and advice. "But you won't get it unless you register for it," warns Kieran Knights, Membership Support & Development Manager at National Office.

To sign up to receive Spread the Word, email [membership@svp.org.uk](mailto:membership@svp.org.uk). You'll then be added to the distribution list until you want to unsubscribe.





## The Cause for Blessed Frédéric Ozanam's Canonisation



In this feature National Council Representative in the Cause for Blessed Frédéric Ozanam's Canonisation, Dr Austin Fagan documents the rollercoaster journey towards Blessed Frédéric Ozanam's hoped for canonisation.

### Possibly miraculous cure in Venezuela

A remarkable cure took place in Venezuela, 7 March 2013, Tomasa Zambrano was admitted to hospital in a critical condition, diagnosed with an obstructed bowel and septic shock (sudden reduction in blood supply). After emergency surgery, further complications appeared. The situation was hopeless and the clinical director suggested to Tomasa's daughter, Yormalis, that she should pray to Blessed Frédéric. He gave her a picture of him. Yormalis placed this under her mother's pillow and began to pray. Tomasa's condition suddenly improved, with no medical explanation.

She returned home 28 April 2013. Subsequent tests showed all values normal. A full dossier, including statements from doctors recognising the inexplicable nature of the cure, was sent to SVP International Council-General, for forwarding to the competent authorities at the Vatican. The claim of a miraculous cure was pursued by the Postulator for Blessed Frédéric's Cause, Fr Shijo Kanmjirathamkunnel CM. Unfortunately, on 22nd January 2014, Tomasa Zambrano's death was announced.

### New Approach

It was suggested the Canonisation could be pursued through a means which would dispense with the need for a second miracle, since a first had been ratified during Blessed Frédéric's Beatification Process. Pope Francis had already dispensed with a second miracle, in the Canonisations of St John XXIII and St John Paul II. Such dispensations dated from the time of Pope Benedict XIV (1740-58), who declared special conditions which could lead to dispensation.

Help was offered by Cardinal André Vingt-Trois, Archbishop of Paris. New research was undertaken throughout 2015 and appropriate documents presented to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. Cardinal Vingt-Trois wrote a personal letter to Pope Francis during the special Synod on the Family, in October 2015. The Pope passed the new dossier to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints and we now await its recommendation.

### Another possibly miraculous cure

A Portuguese SVP Sister, in Porto, had been suffering heart problems since a very young age. After publication, in 2012, of

the new prayer for Blessed Frédéric's Canonisation, she fervently recited it each night. She asked for the special grace of being spared the need for heart surgery. Then, 26 June 2015, her cardiologist declared she would no longer need an operation. A medical dossier, including evidence dating from 1988, was sent to Council-General. Our Postulator, Fr Shijo Kanmjirathamkunnel, showed this to a competent specialist, who concluded the patient had obviously been cured. It now remains to show how this cure was due to Blessed Frédéric's intercession.

### In conclusion...

What can we ourselves continue to do? We are asked to grasp every opportunity:

- to make Blessed Frédéric better-known throughout the Church, as well as through the press, radio, television and Internet.
- to encourage publication of works about him
- to arrange religious celebrations, days of renewal, seminars and conferences.
- to stage special exhibitions to encourage increased knowledge of our Society's principal co-founder.

### Pray especially

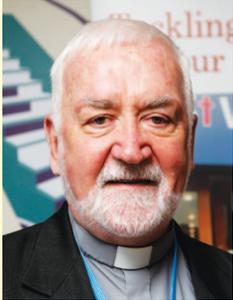
Prayer remains the preferred means to win the grace of a miracle for which we all long.

### The Book of the Sick

This book, now out of print but possibly still in possession of some members, is the account of daily experience by Blessed Frédéric and his wife Amélie, throughout the course of his final illness. It contains Bible texts which he selected, together with the couple's own reflections, meditations and prayers. This witness to Faith, Love and Hope should be known to every Vincentian and offered to those who may find, in this spiritual journey, the courage, comfort and peace they need. With tact and delicacy, we could encourage those who have been offered the book to invoke the intercession of Blessed Frédéric to obtain a cure.

Each month, a new set of petitions is posted on the SVP website under the title The Cause. Visit [svp.org.uk](http://svp.org.uk), log in to the Members Area and search for The Cause. Your generous prayers for those whose names are listed here are appreciated.

## The Vincentian Priests



**I have been asked to introduce you to the Congregation of the Mission, or as they are more commonly known the Vincentian Priests. This is a worldwide Congregation, working in 87 countries, with something over 3,000 members, including both brothers and priests. It was founded in 1625 by St. Vincent de Paul.**

### *I never even dreamt of such a thing!*

Vincent de Paul born near Dax in South West France in 1581, came from a farming family. He was sent to school at considerable financial sacrifice by his father. He determined to become a priest, and was ordained at a very young age in 1600. He made his way to Paris where he hoped to find success and sufficient wealth to assist his family. There he was put in touch with a very wealthy family – the de Gondi Family, who were looking for a priest/teacher for their two boys. Madame de Gondi was very impressed by Vincent and she asked him to visit all the villages on her lands. In one of these villages Folleville, Vincent was sent to the bedside of a dying man. The man confessed that for many years he had been ashamed to confess and that he had lived a double life. After his confession he told Vincent to tell of his experience to as many people as possible, that they too might avail of the Mercy of God. The following Sunday Vincent preached to the whole village on the need for a General Confession, and the response was enormous. The people refused to leave the church and go home until they had the opportunity to make their confession. Vincent saw a huge need, and he began to go from place to place preaching on the necessity for a General Confession. The same success as in Folleville followed in each place. This was in 1617, and Vincent considered it as the beginning of the Congregation of the Mission, even though that did not formally take place till 1625.

### *True Missionary work is for the whole person – body and soul*



A little group of priests quickly gathered around Vincent and very quickly he had them engage directly in the care of the poor who suffered so much as a result of the wars and famines which seemed to envelope so much of the country. In August 1617, Vincent was Parish Priest of a small town in the South East of France, Chatillonles-Dombes, and here began his charitable work.



As he prepared for his Sunday Mass he learned of a family, just outside the town where everyone was ill, and none able to assist or care for the others. He spoke of the plight of these people at Mass and the response was huge. The house was almost piled high with food – vegetables, bread, eggs. Vincent was delighted at the generosity, but saw a problem too - “So much charity – but no organisation” was his comment. He immediately set about arranging a rota of people to take turns in assisting the family. Vincent drew up a Rule for this Confraternity of Charity.

Later he saw the need for people to be available to assist parishes set up these Confraternities of Charity and run them properly, and from this in turn came the Daughters of Charity. The Daughters of Charity were begun by Vincent and Louise de Marillac, and they collaborated closely from 1625 to 1660 when both of them died.

### *Charity knows no bounds*

Over the years there was to be no bound to the works undertaken by an ever widening circle of men and women. The needs in far flung countries, in Vincent’s lifetime missionaries were sent to Poland, Italy, Madagascar, Ireland Scotland, Northern Africa and he had dreams also of China. The face of France was changed by the power of charity and care which they harnessed for the first time. The Congregation of the Mission continues today offering both spiritual and bodily help all around the world – and does so collaborating with a wide range of partner organisations which enable Christian charity to attend to the most abandoned – the largest by far of these partners is the SVP.

Pictured left: The logo of the Congregation of the Mission



# Young Vincentians

## Our Young Vincentian Goal for 2016:

Are you a **TEACHER** approaching **RETIREMENT** or already retired?

Here's a **SPECIAL INVITATION** from the St. Vincent de Paul Society



The St. Vincent de Paul Society has successful programmes in over 300 schools and parishes across England and Wales. Our specially trained Young Vincentians Development Officers, most of whom are retired teachers, develop relationships with local schools and parishes, and support new groups as they start up.

We need experienced teachers to become voluntary Development Officers. There is no need to be a member of the SVP. Simply contact the Young Vincentians team for a role description on [youngvincentians@svp.org.uk](mailto:youngvincentians@svp.org.uk).

BISHOP OF HALLAM DIOCESE, RALPH HESKETT:

"The Works of Mercy make the crucial link between faith and action, or faith and good works, which lies at the heart of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. I am delighted to support the programme."

+ Ralph

To have a retired teacher or SVP member in every District Council trained up as a Young Vincentians Development Officer!

Our Young Vincentian programmes are booming and we want to maintain the momentum by putting in place the necessary infrastructure to support this growth.

New groups can't start up without these YVDOs, as they offer local hands-on help for groups during the start-up phase. When they are part of a group of other like-minded young people, our Young Vincentians develop their relationship with God and grow in love of each other and they can then support isolated, disadvantaged and marginalised people.

### HELP US TO RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS

to start-up and support our Mini Vinnies, Youth SVP, B-Attitude and 1833 groups in your District Council by putting up this poster in your parishes and schools!





## Busy in Boscombe

Since their commissioning just before Christmas, the Corpus Christi Mini Vinnies in Boscombe are well on their way to a target of £105 needed to sponsor seven students under the Student Sponsorship Scheme, Vidya Jyothi in India.

Year 4 held a school quiz and Year 5 held various sporting events. As part of the local community outreach, the Mini Vinnies established a link with a local nursing home where pupils spent time mingling and chatting to the elderly residents and concluded with some entertainment via members of the school choir. A foodbank has started in support of the Corpus Christi adult SVP initiative which provides food for local families in need via the Pokesdown Children's Centre.



Mini Vinnies Commissioning Mass, Boscombe

## Service with a smile!



SVP Youth at St Benedict's Secondary School in Ealing staged their annual Christmas Party for Senior Citizens on Wednesday 9 December in the Cloisters Hall.

Headmaster, Mr Cleugh said: "It was a wonderful occasion which allowed our senior students to demonstrate how we live our Benedictine mission, focusing especially on service and hospitality." Musical entertainment was provided during the afternoon with individual performances on piano, flute, guitar and vocals and two band numbers, including a rousing rendition of 'Jingle House Rock.' Chris Cleugh presided over the all-important Bingo sessions. The afternoon was rounded off with all the guests joining an impromptu student/staff choir in a jolly carol sing-a-long. Refreshments were served throughout by the student team and Father Christmas (Head Boy Francis Curran) was much in evidence, with a 'yo-ho-ho' at appropriate times to liven up the proceedings. Well done to the senior students at St Benedict's who provided service with a smile and brought a little festive joy to some of Ealing's older local residents.



## Balloons and Biscuits at SVP Coffee Morning!

Members of the local Youth SVP and Mini Vinnies were in attendance when St David's Parish in Mold, North Wales, hosted their 3rd annual 'Coffee and Tea with the SVP' event. The pupils raised £130 together with members of the parish, for the SVP Young Vincentian's Programme.



## Knit A Blanket & Keep Me Warm

Year 5 Mini Vinnies at Holy Cross Primary School in Catford have been busy with a new initiative – The Knit a Blanket Project. Three pupils, Ysabella, Osato, Jean-Darrel write of how their MV group decided that helping people keep warm was really important.

They appealed to the parish and families for donations of wool. Most of the group are new knitters and learned to knit in their meetings and by going to a new lunchtime knitting club; their families and teachers also help. Some of the pupils find knitting a real challenge but keep going! They all celebrate when someone produces their first knitted square (or nearly) and earns a Knitting Certificate; they can also earn Knit Tutor Certificates when they teach someone else to knit.

The Mini Vinnies have made two blankets so far so far and were really proud to present these to their families and parishioners attending the special Mini Vinnies Commissioning Mass on 15 March. They received their Certificates from Mr. Patrick Doyle, SVP Conference President.



Holy Cross Mini Vinnies present their Knit A Blanket project work to their parish

## A Day in My Shoes with Mini Vinnies in Hull



Mini Vinnies in Hull attempt to break World Record

Members of the recently formed Mini Vinnies at Endsleigh Holy Child Academy and St Vincent's Academy in Hull have been collecting old unwanted shoes to help the "ADayInMyShoes" campaign.

The campaign is aiming to break a world record on 3rd July 2016 by laying out over 25,000 shoes in a continuous line. The campaign will promote Hull Homeless Outreach and raise awareness of the homeless in Hull. The Mini Vinnies have been busy making posters and counting the shoes. So far each school have collected over 100 shoes - well done Mini Vinnies!

## Delightful Occasion



Mini Vinnies from St Therese of Lisieux Primary School

Mini Vinnies at St Therese of Lisieux Primary School, Ingleby Barwick were commissioned on 29th April.

Mrs Stott, Head teacher, Margaret Clark the SVP Middlesbrough District President and Bernadette Murray MVDO were present. Margaret Clark said this was a delightful occasion.

## New Beginnings



Officers and some of the members of All Saints Conference

To celebrate the formation of the All Saints Conference in South Devon, Secretary, Carole Bryant, made a special cake showing the St Vincent de Paul logo. Warmly supported by parish priest, Fr Mark Skelton, members hope to make their new SVP Conference a source of practical help and spiritual comfort open to the whole community. The formation meeting followed a Mass celebrating the work of the SVP throughout the world.

## Top of the Packing Order!



Rose, Mary and Philomena and the Vinnie Packs

Rose, Mary and Philomena, members of Immaculate Heart of Mary Conference in Hayes have been helping to pack Vinnie Packs at the Conference's storage accommodation in Perivale, West London - three Star Vinnie Pack packers!

## Friends for life at St Teresa's!



St Teresa's Conference celebrate Uriel's birthday

Uriel Doyle turned 90 on Sunday 24th April. Friends from the SVP Conference at St Teresa's Beaconsfield took her out from the residential home where she lives for a celebratory meal to mark the occasion.



## Thoughtful Presentation

**Manchester Central Council held their Annual Diocesan Festival at Thornleigh Salesian College, Bolton on 3rd May.**

Mass was celebrated by Canon David Ryder, Spiritual Director, where members renewed their Vincentian promises. Refreshments (traditional Bolton pasties) followed. Ann Towey, CC President, introduced Officers and summarized the comprehensive work of 65 Conferences.

The guest speaker was John Battle, who spoke on this year's theme 'SVP and the Year of Mercy'. John quoted SVP book 'The Mind and Heart of a Vincentian' on the subject of 'What is poverty?' He carries copies of pages 60-61 and hands these out to Members of Parliament. He highlighted the fact that there are 13 million people in the UK living below the poverty line. His engaging and thoughtful speech sent members away from the Festival celebrations feeling re-energised and up-beat.



John Battle

## Farewell Marie!



Marie Matin a member of the SVP for over 45 years has retired. Marie joined the SVP in Ealing 45 years ago and then started a Conference in her 'new' parish, St Thomas More, Wheathampstead, over 30 years ago. She has been President and then an active member of this Conference until December

2015, when she decided it was time to 'have a rest'. Thank you to long serving SVP member Marie Matin!

## Catenian Gift

**Steve Elliott, President of Weston Super Mare Circle of the Catenian Association kindly designated SVP as his chosen charity.**

Donations from the circle's 27 brothers resulted in the grand total of £800 being raised. A big thank you from the SVP.

Pictured: Steve Elliot handing the cheque to Mike Graham, Bristol CC President.



## Sydenham Bake-Off

**Sydenham Conference Bake-Off was held on 7th February to raise awareness of the SVP.**

Everyone enjoyed the event and it produced some talented bakers within the parish as well as raising funds. The cakes went down well with parishioners and sparked lots of conversations about the SVP!



Bake-Off brilliance!

## The Spirit of Vincentian Friendship

Southwark Central Council Spring Festival Meeting hosted by Our Lady of the Rosary Conference, Hayes, near Bromley in Kent was attended by more than 100 Members, and was a great success! Mass was celebrated by Southwark CC Spiritual Director Canon Edward Perera. Members came from across the South East, including Central London, South and Southeast London, Surrey, and Kent, right down to the Coast. After Mass members were treated to a superb spread of tea and home made cakes, and a lovely spirit of Vincentian Friendship filled the Hall.



Hayes Conference President, Frances Poulter, handing out Candles to Conference Presidents and Representatives, prior to a Rededication Prayer.



## Long and Enduring Commitment

Members from of St Jeanne Jugan Conference in Leeds made a special presentation to Bernard Green for over 60 years of service to the SVP. Bernard's family and some old friends from SVP were present to celebrate Bernard's long and enduring commitment to the Society. The service was followed by a tea and a chat about the old days.

Pictured: Bernard Green (centre) with John Daly and Father Michael Krychiwskyj

## Come on Eileen 35 years of Service!



Eileen McLoughlin and her Conference

Eileen McLoughlin- very popular locally - joined the Shrewsbury Cathedral Conference in 1979 after her husband Harry died. He had been a member of the Conference from when it was set up after the war. She was the first lady member in Shrewsbury. Here, with her daughter Maureen, members of the SVP presented Eileen with a medal for her 35 years membership.

## Goodbye Maureen

Maureen Hicks who is leaving Beaconsfield after nearly 50 years, is a parishioner at St. Teresa's and a long time member of the St Vincent de Paul Society.

To mark her departure she was presented with flowers, a memory book and gift tokens at the SVP Tuesday Coffee Morning. Her leaving was also marked by the Parish in general and an Apostolic Blessing was received from Pope Francis, which was presented by Fr Henry.





# Members' Info

## SVP training into the future: Help us to make an impression!

Over the past 6 months the Membership Development Committee, which comprises five volunteer trainers, three employees and a Trustee, have reviewed all aspects of current training.

The aim of this work is to develop an inspirational training programme that will build on the best of current provision whilst looking to the future. A programme that will enable members to be effective in seeking, finding and helping those in need, whilst also providing opportunities for spiritual growth and increased confidence. New courses are beginning to form and the committee is ready to invite trainers (new, old and aspiring) to come together for a day in which plans will be unveiled for comment. Please come and have your say!

### Ideas to be share include:

- establishing an annual programme of training;
- implementing a new approach to recruiting and training trainers;
- promoting team work between CC and DC Presidents;
- making training for new members more interactive and workshop in style;
- offering training in a variety of ways, including on-line.

If you are already a trainer, or are interested in being one, please step forward to help us with this exciting initiative. For more information, or to book a place, please email Ann Harris on [AnnCHarris@aol.com](mailto:AnnCHarris@aol.com). Places are limited so please book early to avoid disappointment!

Join us on Saturday 2nd July, 10am - 4pm at The Royal Angus Hotel, Birmingham

The cost of £25 includes all refreshments and may be claimed from your Central Council.

## Tell us of any changes, says Teddy



Members have been urged to remember to notify National Office of any changes to Conferences so that the SVP Database can be kept up to date.

"Members are sometimes rightly frustrated if facts are out of date on the Database," says Teddy Curran, Database Officer.

"But we can only put in the latest information if the members themselves have remembered to tell us."

Conference Presidents are encouraged to submit details of new or retiring members, for example, and any changes to members' contact details, and District Presidents are urged to report on Conferences going into abeyance. To make life easier there is a range of forms covering a lot of these changes – including Notification of New Conference, Notification of Council/Conference Changes, Notification of Abeyance and Notification of Conference Name Changes. All are available in the Resources & Forms section of the SVP website.

"The Database is only as good as the information put into it," Teddy points out, "and we are entirely dependent on the members to keep us up-to-date." She adds: "I think it would be a good idea if members regularly checked all the information contained in the entry for their Conference and then let me know of anything that is no longer correct."

Teddy can be contacted at National Office on **0207 703 3030** or email her on [teddyc@svp.org.uk](mailto:teddyc@svp.org.uk).

Have you completed your secretarial return?

**If not, you are now OVERDUE!**

Did you know that late secretarial returns can cost the SVP a lot of money in administration costs and auditor fees? Why waste money? Please complete your returns promptly.



## SVP Walsingham Pilgrimage for the Sick

SVP members are invited to attend the annual SVP Walsingham Pilgrimage for the Sick which will take place on Sunday 3rd July 2016. Members are welcome to bring with them any one who is suffering from an illness who would like to come.

An SVP Mass together with blessing of the sick will take place at 1.30 pm and will be celebrated by the Bishop of Northampton, Bishop Peter Doyle. Weather permitting Mass will take place both inside and outside the church. Simple meals and refreshments will be available at the shrine. The day will conclude with Benediction at 4pm. The first official SVP National Pilgrimage of the Sick took place in 1972, on the first Sunday in July, and has been so titled and dated ever since. There was an SVP pilgrimage in 1971, organised by Peter Willis.

The Shrine at Walsingham is known as England's Nazareth. Please come along and join this special journey. For more information email [info@svp.org.uk](mailto:info@svp.org.uk) or call 020 7703 3030.



## Organisational Review



The deep roots and many branches of the SVP as a complex national and international organisation mean that there is a need to review the organisation every now and then to make sure the methods and ways of doing things do justice to the keen desire to help the poor and build God's kingdom.

That's why the Society is undertaking an organisational review, and has commissioned the Centre for Catholic Studies at Durham University to carry it out.

During the month of May members across the country came together in Focus Groups to examine the structure, co-ordination and communication of the Society between its different levels. The end result will be to ensure that the SVP's structure is fully aligned with its mission and values, while fulfilling current regulatory demands on the Society as a charity. The twelve groups discussed topics such as motivations for joining the SVP, what members see as core values, and whether the Society is experienced as living out these values, what the strengths and weaknesses of the Society are, and suggestions for improvement.

The outcome of the research will be presented to the Board and National Council in the Autumn, and a report will be in the next VC. If you have any questions please email [MatthewS@svp.org.uk](mailto:MatthewS@svp.org.uk).



## Visit to North East India

Whilst Adrian Abel and Stephen Hogg were visiting the work of the SVP in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, as reported in the last Vincentian Concern, Marie Branch from Shrewsbury CC and Terry Brown (National Twinnage Officer) travelled up to the North East, visiting Ranchi, Jamshedpur, Calcutta, Shillong and Guwahati

**As is the case throughout India all Conferences give regular support of food and other essential items to their “adopted families”. This may be a family with no breadwinner due to ill health or disability or may be a single widow or disabled person. This work is of great value in helping the poorest of the poor with day to day needs.**

For these people and others who have a medical need the Conferences will help to pay for necessary medications. People are generally able to get a diagnosis of any health issues but the state will not then provide the necessary medicines. Help is also given with school fees.

Conferences will often also hold regular events to bring people together for a meal and handouts of clothes or, in the North-East, blankets as temperatures can be cold at times.

In Ranchi CC we visited St Joseph’s School in a poor tribal area. The local people are mainly farmers with poor soil and their income is meagre, sometimes as low as £5 per month. They depend for their livelihood on Ration Cards which will give access to subsidised food shops but families still struggle to get more than one meal per day.

They are keen to get an education for their children, to some extent so they can gain employment and provide an income for their families. We agreed to a request to fund the school fees for 22 named children from the Student Sponsorship appeal.



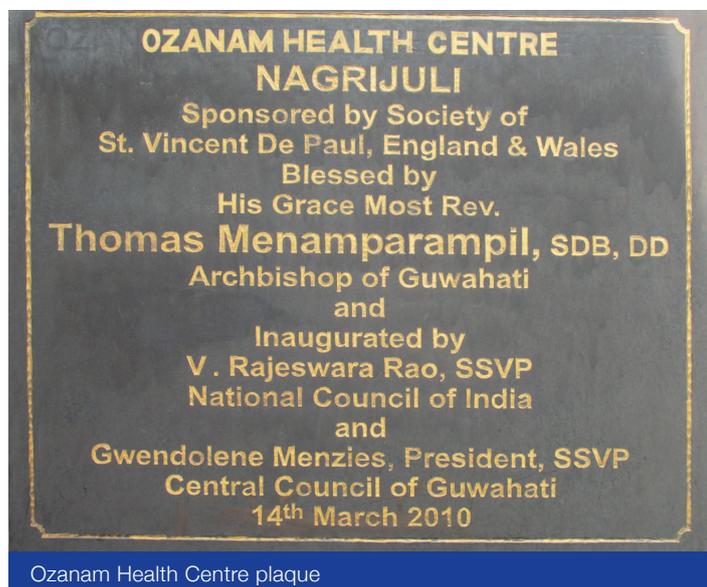
Marie handing a food parcel to an adoptive family

From Calcutta we flew to Guwahati. Here we visited the Ozanam Health Centre in Nagrijuli which was funded from a legacy which we received. The centre is providing essential care to local people. 2540 were seen last year, and we are continuing to send support to help this valuable work. The centre also runs writing courses in Assamese and English travelling out to 10 villages and teaching 450 people in 1 hour classes four days a week. They also give training in health and malaria awareness.

In Shillong CC we visited one of the many small projects which we fund in India each year. £600 was raised by the twin and the money was used to purchase 2 piglets for each of 10 families. These were raised by the families, collecting much of the food locally. One we saw had, after 9 months, sold their two pigs for £210, purchasing two more for £60 getting an additional income of £150. Where the daily wage for a casual agricultural worker is no more than £2.50 per day this makes a great deal of difference to the lives of the families. Led by Sr Gwendoline Menzies (Extension Officer) the SVP in these very poor areas is growing steadily and a third CC is scheduled to be established shortly.

With the national income per person around 4% of ours and some 250 million people living below the UN Poverty line, India is still a desperately poor country. In England and Wales, the amalgamation of parishes and Conferences going into abeyance means that some CCs are really struggling to maintain their support – **can you or your Conference help?**

There is a detailed report on his visit and much other information at [www.twinnage.org.uk](http://www.twinnage.org.uk)



Ozanam Health Centre plaque



## St Chad's hosts Twinnage Officers' Meeting



Twinnage Meeting delegates

**The annual meeting of the Twinnage Officers (TOs) was held St Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham. This event gives Twinnage Committee members and Central Council Twinnage Officers an opportunity to discuss and coordinate strategy for the coming year, and to share ideas.**

The meeting opened with prayers and a Spiritual Reflection. Delegates representing almost all Central Councils in England and Wales were welcomed. Terry Brown thanked Adrian Abel, the National President, for his unfailing support and for his attendance.

Ian Mawdsley reflected on ten years spent championing Twinnage within the Society, where many were unclear on its objectives or the work done.

Disaster Fund support was buoyant during the year, with £10K sent to relieve flood distress in Southern India, £20K to Nepalese earthquake victims, £7.4K to Dominica (hurricane Erica), £10K to flood relief in Cumbria (through the Lancaster CC), £5K to Middle East refugee camps in Austria, and £40K to refugee camps in South Sudan.

The question was then raised: is there still a need for the Sudan Appeal? The answer by Ian was an emphatic: YES. Since 1956, 2 million Sudanese have been killed in endless civil wars, with children orphaned and millions displaced. Funding from Twinnage has given hope and saved many lives. The SVP is a major provider of fresh water supplies, medical clinics, vocational training, educational help, orphanages and foster homes, and feeds 6,000 babies and children every week of the year. The annual appeal target is £250K.

Brief presentations were made explaining how the SVP helps the impoverished in Romania (Mary Abel), Guyana (John Wild) and Grenada (Stephen Hogg).

This was followed by a question and answer session for those wanting more information. To substantiate the importance of education through our Student Scholarships, Sebastian Muir,

(Northampton CC) and whose job regularly takes him to India, stated that 50% of his professional Indian co-workers were first-generation literate! Two break-out discussion sessions were held, where the attendees split into groups to discuss: the future of the Sudan Appeal and how the profile of Twinnage can be improved in the wider Catholic community of England and Wales.

For the Sudan Appeal a number of ideas were voiced: CC Twinnage Officers to develop closer links to Conferences through visiting DCs and parishes; proactively supplying readily available resources (leaflets and recommended pulpit appeals); encouraging Mini Vinnie schemes – children are often more enthusiastic than their parents when fundraising; There were a number of suggestions on improving Twinnage's visibility: once again, the need to keep up regular communication with Conferences and parishes; ensure Conferences are made aware of the Twinnage website ([www.twinnage.org.uk](http://www.twinnage.org.uk)); attend CC and DC meetings and give quarterly updates on the appeals and its wider work. David Wiles, who is responsible for gift-aided donations, stressed the importance to income flow of encouraging individual supporters to sign-up. All Twinnage leaflets incorporate a gift-aid form.

### Can you spot your CC Twinnage Officer?

The meeting ended with prayers and an opportunity to attend the Vigil Mass in the Cathedral. The Mass was offered for the repose of the soul of Bro John Dunn (East Anglia Twinnage Officer), who died just before Christmas.





## The Day the Society of St Vincent De Paul Nearly Lost its Soul!



Our Lady and the apostles experience the descent of the Holy Spirit

**In this feature, David Williams looks at a key moment in the development of the Rule.**

“The final crisis in the development of the Rule nearly caused the Society to lose its soul. It would have turned the Society into a ‘secular’ association, with only a nod in the direction of Christ’s teaching, but nothing more. What happened was this. A Belgium member, an eloquent lawyer, had heard a priest saying that the main reason for belonging to the Society was “for our own sanctification”. Deciding that this was bound to be selfish, using those we visit for our own benefit, he set about removing from the draft Rule, all mention of progress towards holiness and reducing the spiritual dimension. This member convinced the entire Belgium National Council that his changed text would be an improvement, and the President General, Jose Ramon Diaz-Torremocha, invited him to join the Commission for the Rule”, to face up to this issue.

The other members of the Commission were convinced that the problem was a very serious misunderstanding, and that to aspire to sanctification, which is another word for holiness, is innately unselfish and very helpful in our work. But it is one thing to think and say that and another thing to prove it! So began an urgent and thorough study of what ‘holiness’ really is. Every single text on holiness from Vatican II’s ‘Lumen Gentium’ (LG) until 2003 were looked at over and over until the real truth emerged, and it was put straight into the Rule, 2.2. The two definitions of holiness are stated below and it isn’t rocket science to see that both definitions are totally unselfish.

“ “True holiness is the perfection of love” (LG39): what could be more unselfish? What could be better to help us during our visiting and in our relationships with one another? ”

“True holiness is perfect union with Christ” (LG50): this is totally unselfish because our ego-self (the really selfish me) has to decrease if we are to be fully united with Christ. Also, it is great for our work. Jesus says “Whoever remains in me, with me in him, bears fruit in plenty” (Jn 15:5).

If we put the two phrases together, we suddenly realise that true holiness is Christ himself, living and loving through us, as the Rule says: “Vincentians hope that someday it will be no longer they who love, but Christ who loves through them”, echoing Gal 2,20 “it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me”.. (2.1)

This crisis seemed like an attack by the forces of darkness disguised as an angel of light, but out of it came a stronger text than before. When the Rule Commission, in the presence of the antagonist, reached the final proposed text, no one could speak. The previous President General Cesar Nunes-Viana was in tears. So was Walter Schappi of Switzerland. I had filled up completely and could not speak for half an hour. It took Michael Thio of Singapore to say, “The Holy Spirit has been present here”, and Jose Ramon, the President-General agreed. We had to take a break. The crisis was over. The soul of the Society, far from being lost, was not only preserved but deepened.”

David Williams

## John Battle

John Battle is both a Conference member and a Patron of the SVP. Vincentian Concern reports on the life of this highly vivacious, deeply committed former MP living in Leeds, about his motivation, inspiration, and dedication, and why the SVP matters to him.

**There's a clear thread running through the life of John Battle, former MP for Leeds West and a Patron of the St Vincent de Paul Society (SVP). From his student days in seminary through twenty years in politics as well as in his family and community work, John recognises the need to find a balance between withdrawing to pray and active engagement with people.**

This dilemma was developed when as a seminarian (a vocation he explored before entering politics), he spent time engaging with pastoral community work. John helped build up tenants' associations in the local area around Upholland College in Liverpool Diocese, and gained a great sense of purpose and reward from doing practical work with local people. This was in the 1960s, the age of the Second Vatican Council and a "very exciting time for rethinking in the Church – in theology, pastoral studies, and Scripture". This dynamic between practical action and Scripture influenced him hugely. He moved to Leeds to make contact with a Charles de Foucauld fraternity who were ordinary workers living in an ordinary house but managing to live a "life of contemplation in a world of action".



John Battle in the grounds of Kirkstall Abbey

Later, his life would lean from prayer towards action, when asked to stand as a Councillor and later as an MP.

While a Councillor, John was employed as first director of Church Action on Poverty dedicated to campaigning on the causes of poverty. His campaigning work on issues like low pay continued when he became an MP.

He describes how busy his life as an MP was, commuting between Leeds and London, sitting in committee meetings or in the main chamber between Monday and Thursday, heading back to Leeds late on Thursday night and then listening to constituents from Friday's surgery and over the weekend – visiting schools, hospitals, mums and tots clubs, and prisons to name a few. But he learnt important lessons that flowed on from his training in Seminary – the secret of listening: "tuning in to the simple everyday words and gestures of ordinary people".

This is something that the SVP, John says, do extremely well. After retiring from Parliament, he decided he wanted to take on community work and looked at various projects to engage with. The St Vincent's Support Centre in Leeds, part of the SVP, appealed to him. He became an active member of the management committee and works avidly to raise funds and the profile of the Centre. He also understands the value of reaching out to people in need at grassroots level and joined his local SVP group Conference at his parish. Here John visits lonely isolated people, and once again his listening ear and ability to "tune in" to people's needs and dreams is at the forefront of his work.

Echoing the thoughts of L'Arche Community founder Jean Vanier about the importance and value of marginalised people in society, John says: "the poor liberate us rather than the other way round. We think we are helping the poor, but in the end they liberate us. This is discovering the Kingdom, which is why the poor should be centre of the Church, as well as the centre of the Gospel. It's not me saving them, it's them saving me."

Asked what gives him energy, he responds, "Do you think it is great thinkers? Do you think it is books? No. It is people, people, people." He says he meets people in his former constituency every day who inspire him, in the shops or on the bus and in his SVP Conference. "In all these people I see great, gentle, unassuming warmth. They do not shout about what they do but serve others with deep compassion and kindness. What gives me energy is not jogging or taking tablets. People give me energy. People inspire."



# Health and Safety

## Organising a Safe Trip

It's that time of year when many Conferences will be involved in taking individuals and groups on a well needed trip as part of their work with the SVP.

**Organising a trip is a responsibility from which many people shy away from. However, by starting early and with a little forethought it needn't be as complicated as you might think. There is very little doubt that a trip out is of the utmost benefit to any group or individual and the safety and welfare of all involved is very important.**

If you can, plan your trip as far in advance as possible, this ensures you get your choice of location and time of year, and gives a chance to save for the coming trip which makes advance planning important. Deciding on the location for your visit can sometimes be quite challenging, as there are many options available. It all depends on your aims and reasons for the trip. Trip safety is probably at the top of the list of concerns for trip organisers in today's litigious society. This high regard for health and safety issues does not have to stifle the adventurous spirit of trips though. Instead it should create an environment which promotes a challenge by choice in safe surroundings. Below you will find some useful tips on organising a safe trip.

**Risk Assessment:** Before undertaking any trip, Conferences are required to carry out a written risk assessment, thinking about:

- What can go wrong?
- Who might be harmed?
- What can be done to prevent the harm?
- Why it could wrong?
- How may they be harmed?

This will not only ensure Conferences are compliant but will mean that you are endeavouring to protect those involved by having something in place to try and prevent it going wrong. Help on Risk Assessments including generic risk assessments can be found in the Health & Safety section of the members' area of the SVP website.

**Transport:** When planning a trip, careful thought may need to be given to transport. This aspect of the trip must be included in the risk assessment. **Factors to be considered when planning transport by coach or using a personal vehicle include:**

- Passenger safety
- Competence level and training of the driver, and whether she/he has the correct licence
- Number of driving hours
- Capacity and experience of the driver to maintain concentration (for example, is more than one driver needed to avoid fatigue?)
- Type of journey (e.g. is it a local trip or long distance one?)
- Traffic conditions
- Contingency funds and arrangements in case of a breakdown or an emergency
- Insurance cover
- The weather
- Stopping points on long journeys
- Supervision



Using your own vehicle should always be a voluntary activity and vehicles must be road worthy. Do not drive if you feel too tired or unwell to do so safely - the safety of passengers and other road-users is paramount.

**Public Liability Insurance:** The Society has Public Liability Insurance which provides cover for all members of any age; this covers any claims made against the Society or members for injury or damage caused by negligence while engaged in authorised activities on behalf of the Society.

**Personal Accident Insurance:** The Society also provides Personal Accident Cover, however this only protects members aged 16 to 75.

**Use of Personal Vehicle:** The Society insurance does not cover accidents occurred during personal vehicle use. If members are using a personal vehicle they must inform their insurance company that they are using their vehicle for voluntary purposes. Ask the insurance company to acknowledge this application in writing to the policy holder. Most insurers will not charge you extra for this, however some may charge a small fee on your premium.

**Have a Great Time!** When everything is arranged for your trip then it is about being alert and enjoying the trip!

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

### Questions or concerns?

If you require further information about organising a trip please contact Matthew Stockton at National Office on 020 7703 3030

## When 'Safeguarding' and 'Good News' Go Together

SVP policy on safeguarding states that:

*The SVP is committed to the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults, from any form of abuse or maltreatment [including neglect]... It is not easy to identify those who are likely to abuse children or vulnerable adults. Therefore, the Society is committed to undertaking safer recruitment practices in accordance with the policies of CSAS (Catholic Safeguarding Advisory Service). We also liaise closely with statutory agencies to ensure that any concerns or allegations of abuse that are raised are promptly reported and responded to, victims supported and perpetrators held to account.*

Understandably, many members find talk of “victims” and “perpetrators” to be upsetting and a distraction from the good work that we do as an organization. And the Society’s “safer recruitment practices” which include the taking up of DBS disclosures appear to be overly complex and bureaucratic at times.

So if the policy seems to be all about the “bad news” side of safeguarding, what then is the “good news” side you might well wonder? Well, the good news is that on many occasions, members have changed lives for the better by raising safeguarding concerns and following through on those concerns.

For example, last year, a Conference was asked to deliver household items to a family in need. When the members arrived at the home with a new carpet and a voucher for heating oil, they were concerned that one of the children, a four-year-old boy, had no toys to play with. Two days later, they returned with toys and other children’s items. One month later when they visited again, they found that the toys had been removed, and the young boy was listless and appeared undernourished.

Although the Conference had been advised that the family was being monitored by Social Services, the members were concerned enough with the child’s welfare to follow up with the SVP National Office and with local authorities. As a result, Social Services increased their support to the family and began monitoring the little boy’s situation closely. Where would this family be without the compassionate concern from SVP members? Hopefully, SVP support in going the extra mile will be the hand up this family and little boy needs.

## Good News! SVP Raffle Results

We are pleased to announce the results of the SVP raffle which are published below! Thank you to all those who contributed, and congratulations to all our lucky winners! The money raised will go to an excellent cause helping people in need across England and Wales. For confidentiality reasons, we have only published the raffle ticket number and location of the winner below.

PRIZE	NUMBER	LOCATION	PRIZE	NUMBER	LOCATION
1st - £3000	091362	St Helens	14th - £50	022142	Cheltenham
2nd - £2000	110277	Banstead	15th - £50	069569	Washington
3rd - £1000	154603	Bootle	16th - £50	031802	Lytham St. Annes
4th - £100	039130	Sherwood	17th - £50	038216	Bromborough
5th - £100	043021	Northolt	18th - £50	088647	Cottingham
6th - £100	164672	Hove	19th - £50	051150	Nottingham
7th - £100	067510	Buxted	20th - £50	083110	Stockton on Tees
8th - £100	093796	London	21st - £50	075675	Wolverhampton
9th - £100	048855	Croydon	22nd - £50	097093	Southall
10th - £100	095060	Lanchester	23rd - £50	059142	Reading
11th - £100	068661	Peterlee			
12th - £100	091391	St. Helens			
13th - £100	116099	Consett			

ARE YOU  
ONE OF  
OUR LUCKY  
WINNERS?

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



# Behind the Scenes

## Behind the Scenes: Communications



**Bryan Allen** manages communications and fundraising for the SVP and has worked here for nearly four years. Amongst his many tasks are devising the SVP Awareness Month campaign, overseeing the production of the Members report and Annual Report, and managing the development of the new website.

Bryan previously spent 20 years in China where he ran an NGO specialising in language and cultural development for ethnic minorities. A linguist himself, Bryan worked in bilingual education to help people use their mother tongue.

Outside of the SVP, Bryan is a passionate supporter of the campaign to abolish Trident nuclear weapons. He says: "I campaign because I am opposed to militarism and nuclear weapons in particular. The Bible says 'do not kill'. One of the most powerful statements Jesus ever made was love your enemies. I think that is what sets him apart from everyone else. There is no justification for anyone, especially a Christian, to hold or threaten the use of nuclear weapons to kill thousands of innocent non-combatants". One of his favourite quotes comes from Kathleen Lonsdale, Fellow of the Royal Society: "The real horror is not that we might be bombed, but that we should ever think of using the bomb against anyone else".

Bryan is passionate about social justice and building a fairer and more equal world. "I went to China to help minority groups who are exploited and discriminated against." This thread continued when he joined the SVP. "Here too we are building a fairer world. Fewer people suffer loneliness and poverty and isolation because members of the SVP are doing something about it."



**Anita Boniface** is Media and Communications Officer at the SVP, producing in house publications such as the Vincentian Concern, staff newsletters and is responsible for external press communications and SVP social media.

A trained journalist, Anita has written about the SVP for a variety of Catholic publications. She says: "By God's grace I have found a vocation which uses my skills and talents to serve God through my writing for the SVP and the Catholic press. I would like to contribute by being a voice for the voiceless and a representative of the Catholic faith".

She previously worked as Media and Publications officer for the Diocese of Westminster, where her work included photographing the beautiful Cathedral and writing about the Cardinal's homilies. She also spent several years as an International Publishing Manager for the publishing company Dorling Kindersley, covering the Far East.

Anita volunteers with the Missionaries of Charity at their soup kitchen for the homeless in London, and previously volunteered in India where she cared for orphaned children with disabilities in Kolkata. She enjoys watching science documentaries and following the International Space Station media coverage. She says "I enjoy any form of media which makes science accessible. I believe science is one route to appreciating the brilliance and beauty of God's creation.

Anita is supported one day a week by Communication and Fundraising Assistant, Alex Thomson who started his SVP journey in January this year.



**Alex Thomson** is Communication and Fundraising Assistant. He started his SVP journey in January this year and supports Anita one day a week.

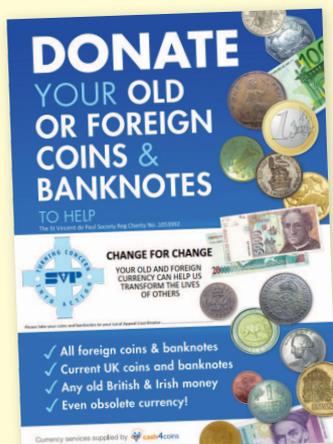
Alex designs the staff newsletter, has compiled a comprehensive catalogue of case studies, helps manage social media and assists with proof reading

all publications produced by the Communications team. To Alex, the SVP is a "friendly and helpful place" where he describes being made to feel very welcome. He really enjoys the contact he has with members, and is inspired by members' work with those in need. He feels a sense of belonging and excitement to be part of a huge international charity. He describes the SVP as "everyone working together and helping each other". Having graduated from a degree in Film and History from Winchester University in 2014, Alex went on to work for a heritage charity, helping with social media campaigns, HR and administration. He also volunteered in Front of House welcoming visitors to their museums.

Outside of work Alex is a keen cyclist. He cycles every day, going on in longer rides at the weekends, often in the local Essex countryside where he lives.

Drawing on his social media skills, Alex is also running a project to post on social media lines from his great grandfather, John Swan Thomson's First World War diaries, exactly 100 years after they were written.

## Summer time, and the collecting is easy...!



It's that time of year again, when many people head abroad for a holiday and return with leftover currency such as Swedish Kroner or Turkish lira, which they will never use again and which it is not worth them exchanging for pounds.

All that foreign currency can be collected at no cost to you and

converted into income for your Conference. It's so easy:

- Make a collecting container (this can be an old plastic drinks bottle with a slit cut near the top)
- Order posters or stickers from National Office ([alex@svp.org.uk](mailto:alex@svp.org.uk)), or make your own.
- Collect a minimum of 5kg to qualify for free postage. 10kg or more and the coins will be collected by courier from your house or church.
- When you have enough, phone Cash4Coins on **0161 635 0000**. They will send you labels and tell you your nearest pickup point where you can drop off your coins.
- Cash4Coins sort out all the currency and convert it to sterling. They send the total amount to National Office and we then forward half the amount back to your Conference.

So far the scheme has raised over £15,000 for the SVP! Some Conferences have raised over £300 this way, and several have sent in more than one bottle's worth. Remember, absolutely any coins or notes (foreign, British, old, new) are accepted. So what are you waiting for?!



## The Big Mile

By the time you get this edition of the VC, walks will may have taken place in some parts of the country, to raise awareness of poverty in the UK and to raise funds for the SVP and partner organisations.

The Big Mile is a simple concept: walk one mile to step out against poverty. The short distance means anyone can join in, so this is very much a community affair. It's a chance to hold a fun public event and draw in parishioners who may not know very much about the SVP. Participants pay just £5 to walk (£1 for children), and the funds raised are split four ways: between the SVP and the partner charity (e.g. DePaul) at a local level, and between the SVP and CSAN (Caritas Social Action Network) at a national level.

This year walks are being held in Manchester, Shrewsbury, Westminster, Southwark, Tyne, Middlesbrough, and A & B. Most walks are parish based but some are being organised on a wider basis. For example, if all goes well, there will be a walk in Hyde Park on June 26th, at which we hope to see hundreds of people taking a stand against poverty and enjoying a pleasant walk together in the process.

It might not be too late for you to join a walk this year. Check out the website for full details of walk:

[www.bigmile.org.uk](http://www.bigmile.org.uk)

## Coffee Morning 2016

Thank you to all of you who ran coffee mornings to mark Founder's Day on April 23rd.

So far around 60 Conferences have raised over £5,000 for our Young Vincentians. It would be fantastic if more Conferences could hold a coffee morning (or tea party, or bake-off, or pub quiz) to help us reach young people around the country. See the Young Vincentian pages to read more about the good work being done.





# CEO's Message

## "Show us your works"

The Society recently undertook its first Society-wide Investors in People (IIP) Assessment. The SVP in England and Wales currently employs in the region of 180 staff. The vast majority of these are employed directly on the front line in customer facing projects delivering services.

**The Board of Trustees is committed to ensuring that the Society is a good employer and the IIP is a good tool to evaluate where we are and how we might improve. As part of the process the independent assessor interviewed 30 staff, randomly sampled from a spread of projects.**

I am delighted to say that we have since been accredited with IIP and we are now studying the report and its recommendations. However I would like to share with members the following from the assessor's report about the SVP and its staff, who are of all faiths and none:

"SVP is very much a values-based organisation, and people are very clear on the values and operate within them. This is an area where SVP is exceeding the IIP Standard at the Core Level....The Assessor met a very dedicated staff group, who are committed to the values of the organisation, and the dedication towards helping others was evident. In essence, people are delivering what is expected of them in line with the values."

In speaking with the assessor about the report this was the aspect which struck him most. He recounted meeting with a van driver who explained that he was not a religious man and that he had been sceptical when he first started working with the



Society but that he had been impressed by the fact that the SVP is genuine and really lives out its mission, along the lines of "they say it, they do it and they mean it!"

"Show us your works" was the taunt to Frederic Ozanam which pre-empted his founding the SVP. I think he would be proud of the response of SVP staff in this instance.

*Elizabeth Palmer, CEO*

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

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

**Kathleen Buckley** - Conference President and long serving member of St Patrick's Conference, Peel, Isle of Man.

**Dr Cyril Burdett-Smith** - long serving member and President of St Hugh and St John Conference, West Timperley.

**Doris Cockburn** - a member of St Bede's Conference, Newport Pagnell.

**Joe Concannon** - long standing member of Our Lady Star of the Sea Conference, Ellesmere Port.

**Thomas Fogg** - founder member and former president of Holy Cross and St Paul's Conference, Birkenhead.

**Arthur Jones** - co-founder and long serving Secretary of St Teresa of Lisieux, Lexden Conference, Colchester, and former Secretary to Colchester DC and Brentwood CC.

**Ian Kirby** - long standing member of St. Cecilia's (Anglican Conference) Sheffield and St Thomas More

Conference, Sheffield and former DC President of Sheffield DC.

**Tom Maddison** - long standing member and Conference Treasurer of Ss Peter and Paul's Conference, Sandal, Wakefield.

**Bernard Palmer** - long serving member and former president of Sacred Heart Conference, Aire Valley and former president for Bingley DC.

**Maria Roper** - member and Treasurer of St Sabina's & St Monica's Conference, Brightlingsea.

**Anne Taylor** - long serving member of St Chads Conference, South Norwood.

**Patricia Welsh** - long serving member and former president of St Bede's Conference, Jarrow.

**May they rest in peace.**

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





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## Sources of Funding

### CHAS Catholic Housing Aid Society (West London)

CHAS (West London) was established in 1965 and is part of St Vincent Family Housing Association Ltd. The aim of the charity is to assist anyone with a 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](http://www.chas-uk.org) or obtained from Noreen Villiers by post: 46 Bradley Road, London SE19 3NS or email [noreenvilliers@AOL.com](mailto: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.

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](http://www.davidyoungscharity.co.uk) or email [trustees@davidyoungscharity.co.uk](mailto:trustees@davidyoungscharity.co.uk)

Registered Charity Number 238877



# Notice Board

## 2016-17 Diary Dates

### Board Meetings

- 15th September** - London National Office
- 14th - 15th October** - Hinsley Hall (Residential)
- 25th November** - Hinsley Hall (*Before National Council*)
- 2nd February 2017** - London National Office
- 17th March** - Hayes Conference Centre - Swanwick
- 4th May** - London National Office
- 23rd June** - London National Office (*Before National Council*)

### National Council Meetings

- 25th - 26th November** - Hinsley Hall (Residential)
- 17th - 18th March 2017** - Hayes Conference Centre - Swanwick
- 24th June** - London

### Inviting content contributions for VC Winter Edition 2016

Next deadline for sending news and information for VC Winter Edition 2016 is 25th October 2016. 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](mailto: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 Bryan Allen at National Office on 020 7703 3030 or [bryana@svp.org.uk](mailto:bryana@svp.org.uk)

### Editorial Policy

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

**Publisher** CD&P Limited  
**Managing Editor** Anita Boniface  
**Executive Editor** Elizabeth Palmer  
**Editorial Board** Adrian Abel, Elizabeth Palmer, Helen O'Shea & Bryan Allen

Letters and articles for inclusion in the magazine should preferably be emailed to [anitab@svp.org.uk](mailto:anitab@svp.org.uk) or submitted to: 9 Larcom Street, Walworth, London SE17 1RX.

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



Members of Immaculate Heart of Mary SVP Conference in Hayes with Vinnie Packs they helped assemble

