

# Vincentian Concern

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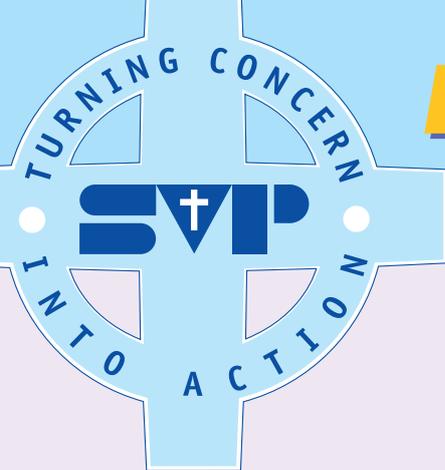
INSIDE: MEMBERS' ANNUAL REPORT • CONFERENCE SPOTLIGHT P4

## OPEN YOUR HEART



YOUNG VINCENTIAN P12-13 • BEHIND THE SCENES P22

# IN THE YEAR OF MERCY



## Charities Under Attack



**The last year was a horror story for charities, who have been attacked on many issues, to the delight of some newspapers that are often resentful of the work being done in areas they do not approve of.**

Best known was "Kids Company", which took on work too difficult for government, but received very substantial grants. In spite of warnings that there were shortfalls in their procedures, funding continued, apparently by having friends in high places. Their trustees were accused of caving into the company's charismatic and persuasive founder. While Blessed Frédéric was certainly charismatic, I am sure no one could accuse him of continuing to be persuasive some 160 years after his death.

Our structures protect us from such criticism, as most work is carried out at a local level and the grants awarded to us are small. However, this means that local groups in receipt of grants not only have to be honest, but need to demonstrate honesty and transparency. Although SVP Trustees recognise the need to delegate, they are still legally responsible and need clear assurances that those to whom they delegate responsibility meet the conditions of any grants.

Saddest of all was the case of Olive Cooke, who committed suicide after being plagued with requests from numerous charities. Most of us cope with such demands but, sadly, older people may find this difficult. Charities often employ professional fundraisers, who are paid a percentage of the money they raise. The SVP does not use such practices. Occasional letters are sent out to regular benefactors, especially "Friends", but no one is paid a commission and such requests are only made occasionally.

Now it is Age UK's turn for criticism after negotiating a deal with Eon, recommending certain Eon energy tariffs, but at the same time receiving large grants from Eon. Although maintaining that the two were independent, purchasers of this energy scheme found the tariffs were significantly higher than could be obtained from Eon independently. The SVP does not rely on any company for significant grants, and therefore could not offer such packages even if it so wanted.

No room for complacency, but I believe we can hold our heads high. Not having grants, professional fundraisers or negotiating commercial deals makes us vulnerable when competing for funds. Some of you have participated in the exercise to look at alternatives to the current SVP support. This is an attempt to find a more equitable way of Conferences paying their fair share. Under the current system over 100 Conferences pay no support, which is not fair to the rest of the Society. I trust those paying nothing will amend their practices.

*Adrian Abel, National President*

### Welcome to the 50th edition of the Vincentian Concern!

We have taken the opportunity, as we reach this milestone in VC history, to make a few changes to the order of content in the VC, which you will soon notice as you flick through. We want the magazine to be accessible to everyone who picks it up, and for new readers to be drawn in. We have therefore decided to begin the VC, after the President and Spiritual Adviser have had their say, with Conference Spotlight - an in depth look at how members are turning their concern into action in their unique context.

We then move onto features and articles that we hope will be of interest to all; moving through Society news and finishing up with members' info. The table of contents on this page will help you find whatever it is you are looking for.

This edition also includes the annual members' report for 2014-15 which you can pull out and keep. Please try and read it! By including it with the VC we can save money on design and postage.

We hope you like our continual attempts to improve the VC. Please send us your feedback!

*Editorial Board*

### Inside this Issue

|                                 |       |
|---------------------------------|-------|
| President's Column              | 2     |
| Spirituality                    | 3     |
| Conference Spotlight            | 4     |
| Conferences working with others | 5     |
| Conferences and Disaster Relief | 6     |
| Recruitment                     | 7-9   |
| Community Support Projects      | 10-11 |
| Young Vincentians               | 12-13 |
| Young Vincentian Society News   | 14-15 |
| Society News                    | 16-19 |
| Twinnage                        | 20-21 |
| Behind the Scenes               | 22    |
| Vincentian Family               | 23    |
| Fundraising                     | 24-25 |
| Health and Safety               | 26-27 |
| Members' Info                   | 28-29 |
| CEO's Message                   | 30    |
| Diary Dates                     | 32    |

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Keep in touch with us:

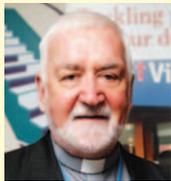
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Scan to visit our website or go to:  
[www.svp.org.uk](http://www.svp.org.uk)

## Easter eggs and fluffy chicks



**Hot-cross buns have been in the supermarkets for some weeks now and gradually they are being joined by chocolate rabbits and eggs. It may be just the start of Lent - but Easter is coming! What does it mean for our members?**

We are all familiar with the central message of Easter, the celebration of the rising of Jesus from the dead. However it seems that somehow we have a less good grasp of its practical meaning than we have of Christmas, a feast which dwarfs Easter for a great many people and families, perhaps including many of our members.

This year we have a special help in making Easter more meaningful for us personally than previously, that assistance is the current Holy Year of the Lord's Mercy. Pope Francis has stressed that the mercy of God is the very heart of our Catholic belief. Our salvation depends on it. Mercy: the word reveals the very mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. Mercy: the ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet us. Mercy: the fundamental law that dwells in the heart of every person who looks sincerely into the eyes of his brothers and sisters on the path of life. Mercy: the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness.

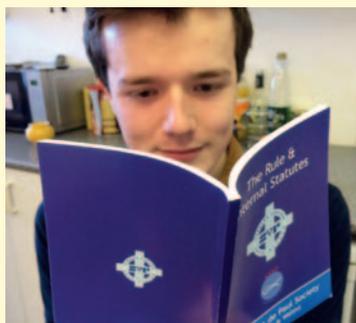
We celebrate Easter not just because of Jesus rising from the dead, but also because of what it means for each of us personally. By His rising from the dead, Jesus overcame sin and its product - death, forever. We have been freed of sin, and are assured of eternal union with God as his children. So far so good. But there is more - and especially this is for SVP members: what we have received, we must live and show to others!

It is my burning desire, says Pope Francis, as if speaking especially to SVP members, that during this Jubilee, the Christian people may reflect on the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. *Jesus introduces us to these works of mercy in his preaching so that we can know whether or not we are living as his disciples. Let us rediscover these corporal works of mercy: to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, heal the sick, visit the imprisoned, and bury the dead. And let us not forget the spiritual works of mercy: to counsel the doubtful, instruct the ignorant, admonish sinners, comfort the afflicted, forgive offences, bear patiently those who do us ill, and pray for the living and the dead.*

Don't allow Easter eggs and fluffy yellow Easter chicks to divert you from the reality we celebrate at Easter.

*Paul C Roche CM.*

## The International Rule: What's Simplicity All About?



**This is the first in a series of articles on the Rule. If you have any questions on the Rule or would like to see commentary on a particular section, please let the VC editors know.**

In some ways it would be much easier and more interesting to have, say, a

dozen people in a room firing questions about our Rule. Even that could be a bit pedestrian, but we have one virtue mentioned in the Rule (2.5.1) that could liven it up. It is the virtue of SIMPLICITY. You would think it meant "being naïve and having a simple faith". But it doesn't. The Rule defines it as "frankness, integrity, genuineness".

It was one of St Vincent's favourite virtues and when he was nearly 80 and close to death he said that Simplicity was the one virtue he had made some progress in. "I now call a spade a spade," he said. Yes, a roomful of people who say it as it is, who speak their mind, who without fear or favour say exactly what they think and challenge if necessary - that would make for a really lively meeting! It is very Vincentian.

The word also appears in a description of a good Conference or Council meeting: "Meetings are held in a spirit of fraternity, simplicity and Christian joy" (3.4). Does that describe your own Conference meetings, or have they become a bit too serious? Do they need lightening with humour?

I have not done justice to Simplicity. It could, of course, all go wrong. We could begin to raise our voices. Then "calling a spade a spade" could become rudeness, which is not Vincentian! So here are three suggestions, to keep a true balance:

- **Always make a constructive suggestion. If we disagree with something, never just criticise it. Be positive.**
- **Always be kind. Yes, we can express strong views and still be kind: "Our mutual kindness should be warm and without limits" (Preliminary Considerations to S.S.V.P. Rule 1835).**
- **Assume goodwill, that others who hold different views are genuinely trying to do their best for the people they visit or for the Society.**

So yes, let's speak our minds, vigorously if we wish, but why not give one another a smile of encouragement, remembering that Mother Teresa said, "A smile is the sunshine of God's love."

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



# Conference Spotlight

## We shall drive 500 miles, and we shall drive 500 more

**On 30th November 2015 SVP members from Wallasey and Chester shared a special cake to celebrate the first birthday of a venture called the Lifts to Chester Rota. This rota, which involves up to 19 different drivers and 7 different Conferences, was put together to help just one lady travel from Wallasey to Chester and back again. So why all the effort?**

### What's the background?

The lady in question is called Sally (*not her real name*). She lives in Wallasey. She was referred to our Conference of Holy Apostles and Martyrs (HAM) SVP, Wallasey, by CC President Dominic Ion in late December 2012. Sally is registered blind, though she has some sight, and she needed help over Christmas and New Year to visit her brain-injured son in Walton Hospital, Liverpool. HAM organised lifts for 5 days when there was little or no public transport. That might have been the end of the matter if Sally's son had not had a massive seizure in early January 2013 and, as often happens in SVP stories, the driving continued and the support level increased as her son lay in a deep coma for months and months on end. And so it went on until...

### Mid - October 2014

By then Sally's son had made slow but significant progress and was considered ready to be moved to a specialist Rehabilitation Unit in Chester, over 20 miles away from Wallasey. Sally was absolutely distraught: it might as well have been the other end of the world. After experimenting with train travel and realising that even the walk from the station to the Unit was impossible, HAM started to think creatively: Would it be possible to have one set of drivers take Sally down to the Unit in Chester and another set of drivers to pick her up and bring her home? And to do this three times a week? It would mean a lot of goodwill from a lot of people. Time to approach Dominic Ion and find out who to approach in Chester.

### The Arrival of the Rotal

Fortunately Dominic was very enthusiastic. He promised to cover any expenses the DC or Conferences could not meet and then pointed Wallasey in the direction of the wonderful Chester DC President, David Farrell. Within weeks, David had got several Chester parishes involved and organised them into a 2-week rota so no-one drove more than once a fortnight. Together we fixed some strict ground rules and by 17th November we were up and driving. HAM provided the Wallasey end but we were quickly joined by St Albans SVP, Liscard. Within no time at all, we had enough drivers, men and women, willing to do the 20 miles from / to Wallasey.



David Farrell and the Chester Drivers with their anniversary cake

### Has it all been worth it?

- Yes, because we have been able to keep a little family together. Without us, Sally simply could not have gone to the Rehab Unit to see her son. We are her beacon of hope.
- And yes, yes, yes, because her son has thrived in the Unit and made wonderful progress and everyone acknowledges this might not have been the case without this regular contact with his Mum.

### These strange gentlemen?

One day, as I was leaving the Rehab Unit, the very kind lady on reception, obviously curious, asked: 'Excuse me, Sue, we have all been wanting to ask you something. We've noticed that Sally is picked up by a different car and a different man every time she comes. Who are all these strange gentlemen?' After resisting the temptation to spin her some tale about Exciting Escorts 4U, I told her all about the SVP. She was genuinely amazed.

### The Future?

More of the same. We shall continue driving until we are no longer needed. Sally loves meeting so many people and loves even more knowing that there are people out there who care. If you are an SVP member with DBS and live in the Wallasey or Chester District and want to join our rota, just email me on [wallaseysvphelpine@gmail.com](mailto:wallaseysvphelpine@gmail.com) Meanwhile, please keep Sally and her son in your prayers. And next November, we shall have a bigger cake!

*Sue Johnson, Holy Apostles and Martyrs SVP Conference, Wallasey*

## Collaboration is Key!



Volunteers from Settle Conference collecting supplies for refugees

**SVP members try and respond to requests for help, but there are times when a Conference simply does not have the resources to meet a need. This is when collaboration is especially useful.**

Other charities or churches might complement the work we do with specialist skills such as offering debt advice. Often by working together more can be accomplished as time and resources are pooled. This feature takes a snapshot of some of the Conferences working with other charities to help the vulnerable in their local communities.

### Feeding the hungry

Members of St Peter and the Guardian Angels SVP Conference, Rotherhithe collaborate with their local foodbank to feed the hungry in their local community.

The Conference collects food donated by the local parishioners when they attend weekly Mass. When there is sufficient quantity, Vice President Suzan Crawley and her husband deliver the donations to the Southwark Foodbank called Pecan, based in Peckham. Pecan was set up in 1989 as a Christian organisation run by local churches.

The SVP Conference is given foodbank vouchers to help people they visit who can then collect the food from the foodbank. Suzan says: "This way, food which is donated goes straight back into our local area. Nothing is wasted and we know that we are helping a local organisation and local people who are much in need."

Indeed, SVP members were especially busy at Christmas working with the charity Crisis. The Crisis at Christmas warehouse gave some of its surplus food left over after cooking

30,000 meals for the homeless over an eight day period to the SVP. Michael Clout from Crisis spent two days collecting and logging the food details so that everything could be catalogued.

Rotherhithe Conference have also begun working with the parish's Legion of Mary group. While the Legion of Mary is centred primarily around prayer, they are referring people in need to the Conference for practical help. This means that the Legion is serving the poor in prayer and in practical terms, says Suzan. An Oxfam charity shop which was closing down recently delivered blankets, sleeping bags and toiletries to the Rotherhithe Conference when they found out they had links to a food bank. This meant the Conference could distribute the goods where they were most needed.

### Finding Specialist Advice

A member of a Conference in Stockport also volunteers with the local Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and his Conference regularly refers clients to the CAB. He is keen to promote the benefits of working with the CAB who have specialist advisers and guidelines as well as financial resources from which SVP beneficiaries can draw. The Stockport Conference recently assisted a refugee family who had converted from Islam to Christianity and were fleeing from persecution in their home country. The SVP gave the family with their three small children clothes, food and money and advised the mother to approach the local CAB. The CAB had specialist advisers who provided immigration advice and referred the family on to the local housing association for accommodation. Anne Stephenson from Christ the King Conference, Wimbledon Park has also worked with her local CAB to help beneficiaries. Anne remembers a couple who were not managing their money well, and Anne's Conference referred the couple to the local CAB for Budgeting advice.

### Assisting Refugees

St Mary and St Michael's Conference, Settle, are collaborating with the Bentham Refugee Support Group. Members of the Conference recently helped collect and distribute over 250 black sacks full of donated clothing, bedding and shoes to Bradford's Red Cross charity shop. Conference President Tony Hennigan said: "We filled their store to absolute capacity - they simply couldn't take any more". The Conference then arranged for surplus donations to be stored at the SVP depot on Rees Way in Bradford.

These are just some of the ways in which SVP Conferences are reaching and assisting beneficiaries by working with other charities. We'd love to hear about how other Conferences are collaborating with charities and church organisations. If you have a collaboration story, send it to [AnitaB@svp.org.uk](mailto:AnitaB@svp.org.uk).



# SVP Conferences Responding to the Floods

Many readers will be aware of the severe flooding which has devastated people's lives in parts of the country. One such area is Kendal and Carlisle where Central Council President Raymond Daley and SVP Conferences have been helping flood victims restore their lives after being affected by the treacherous weather.

**In Kendal, 2800 properties have been flooded and people are being housed in local hotels, hostels and empty properties. Many have been told they will be unable to return to their homes before May or June. Raymond says "With some people made homeless for an anticipated 10 months we are in it for the long haul."**

Raymond says: "Members across Kendal and Carlisle have been helping people whose homes have been damaged. My own Conference, Holy Trinity and St George in Kendal, put together an extra 50 food hampers at Christmas for people who have been affected by the floods. Our Parish Centre has opened on Tuesdays and Thursdays as a 'drop in centre' for flood victims. Alongside other parishioners, SVP members offer the usual SVP support of befriending as well as counselling, and signposting".

Ingrid Fox is a member of Our Lady and St Joseph's Conference, Carlisle and describes how her Conference has helped many people: "Uninsured retired musician JC was watching television when the flood defences outside his ground floor flat in Caldew Maltings were breached - filling his beautiful home with four feet of sewage water. JC, who is disabled, was evacuated by a motorboat to a friend's home. Due to the nature of his disability JC was unable to climb the stairs and had to sleep on two sofas pushed together on the ground floor. In this environment his carers did their best to attend to his needs. As JC's friend was going away for Christmas, he contacted a local housing association who offered him a ground floor flat on the outskirts of the town. Help and resources were needed to make the accommodation habitable. The housing association painted and partially carpeted the flat and members from Our Lady and St Joseph Conference provided the manpower and the Disaster Fund the resources to turn this shell into a home. Conference members worked in teams to literally set up home for JC - including providing TLC to revive his flood damaged plants.

Every member had different skills and strengths to offer including organising kitchen utensils, filling cupboards with appropriate shopping, laying out furniture, cleaning windows and floors and even waiting for utility providers to change the meters.



Homes have been left destroyed



Volunteers from the Kendal Church open night for Flood victims

JC said: "It is difficult enough being suddenly made homeless; being without family and having physical disabilities also means one is dependent on others. Fortunately, members of the SVP were told of my situation and several responded immediately by helping to salvage and clean what little hadn't been ruined, and by helping to move me into accommodation provided by Impact Housing. The fact that only one of those assisting was previously known to me shows the selfless nature of the organisation, peopled by Good Samaritans from all walks of life. Had I not received this help, I would have been consigned to a hospital. Words are unable to express my gratitude to all concerned."

Ingrid continues: "Uninsured single mum YT lost everything in her downstairs flat. Members from Our Lady and St Joseph's Conference provided her with bedding, toaster, kettle, and a microwave. A Conference member even donated a tabletop tumble dryer. Help has also been provided to individuals by laundering precious soft goods which were flood-soiled but saved by the owners concerned. People's needs have been numerous and this is just the start of the requests for help as victims have been scattered far afield."

**To find out more about the SVP response to the floods visit: <http://kendalcatholicchurch.org/site/open-nights-for-flood-victims/>**

## Smoothing the path for DBS clearances

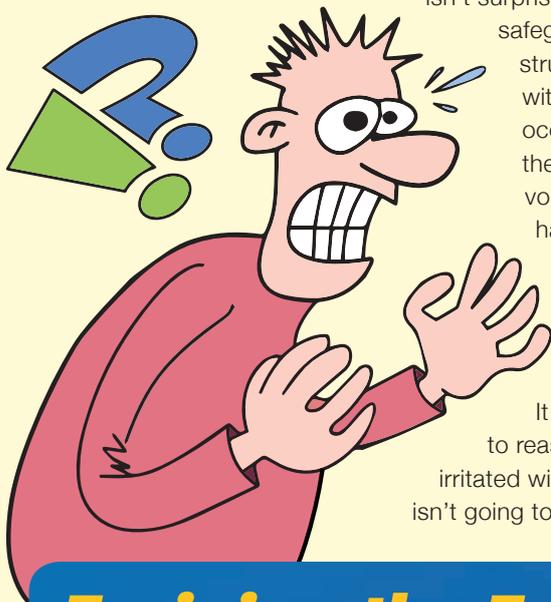
**A frequent moan from new members is how long it takes to get their DBS clearance. This can be a particular problem for new Conferences where nobody can start visiting until the clearances come through. But is there anything that can be done to speed up the DBS procedure?**

The DBS - standing for Disclosure & Barring Service and the modern version of what used to be called the CRB check - is a common irritant for most SVP members. Although the vast majority of us acknowledge the need for the DBS in the modern world we also can't resist having a good grumble about it from time to time. The trouble is, the clearance process can often seem to take an inordinate amount of time. Sometimes this can be due to some hiccup in the procedure - for example, at time of writing, the Metropolitan Police is struggling to cope with demand which is slowing up clearances in parts of Southwark and Westminster Central Councils.

Sometimes, the hold-up occurs at local level with the parish safeguarding representative. When you think about it, it

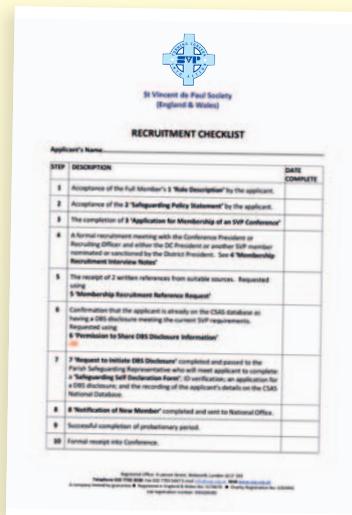
isn't surprising that the safeguarding reps struggle to cope with demand occasionally; they're usually volunteers who have numerous competing responsibilities within the parish.

It therefore stands to reason that getting irritated with the person isn't going to help.



On the contrary, a diplomatic approach can pay dividends. Why not try inviting the parish safeguarding rep to your Conference meeting. It gives you a chance to explain what the SVP is all about and for the rep to explain the DBS procedure.

Listen carefully to what they say and watch out for any errors that might slow up the process. A common problem is that the safeguarding rep will ask a new member to fill in a Parish Volunteer application form which asks for two references.



There is, of course, no need for an SVP member to do this as they will have already filled in an almost identical SVP membership form and we will have already checked references. Avoiding such duplication will naturally speed up the process. Better still, an SVP member could consider volunteering to become a parish safeguarding representative themselves. There is no limit on the number of safeguarding reps in a parish, you'd just have to get the Parish Priest to agree and he'd probably be delighted to have another volunteer.

Sometimes delays in DBS clearances are down to mistakes in form filling by the SVP members themselves, so, at the risk of stating the obvious, it is worthwhile reading the paperwork carefully to avoid errors that might cause a frustrating hold-up later. All the forms and explanations needed for processing new members can be found in the Recruitment Section of the SVP website, including the useful checklist. Visit the site regularly to find a wealth of downloadable resources. If you don't have a password to get you into the Members' Area of the website, contact National Office on **0207 703 3030**.

## Training the Trainers

Seven new trainers were trained to deliver the Induction Course in November. The course took place at Fircroft College, Birmingham and was run by Robert Chronnell, Peter Wells and Mike Walmsley.

The course also included some help with delivering the lectern address for recruitment purposes. Those who took the course were: Margaret Clark (Middlesbrough CC), Jane Clarke (Shrewsbury CC), Ollie Dennis (Portsmouth CC), Meg Larvin (Shrewsbury CC), Marlyn Morgan (Leeds CC), Pat Nobbs (Middlesbrough CC), Tracy Reilly (Brentwood CC). The course was very well received. Here is some attendees' feedback:

*'Inspiring'; 'An excellent course, valuable for undertaking the development of the SVP'; 'The trainers were encouraging and motivating, with constructive guidance'; 'I thoroughly enjoyed the whole experience'.*

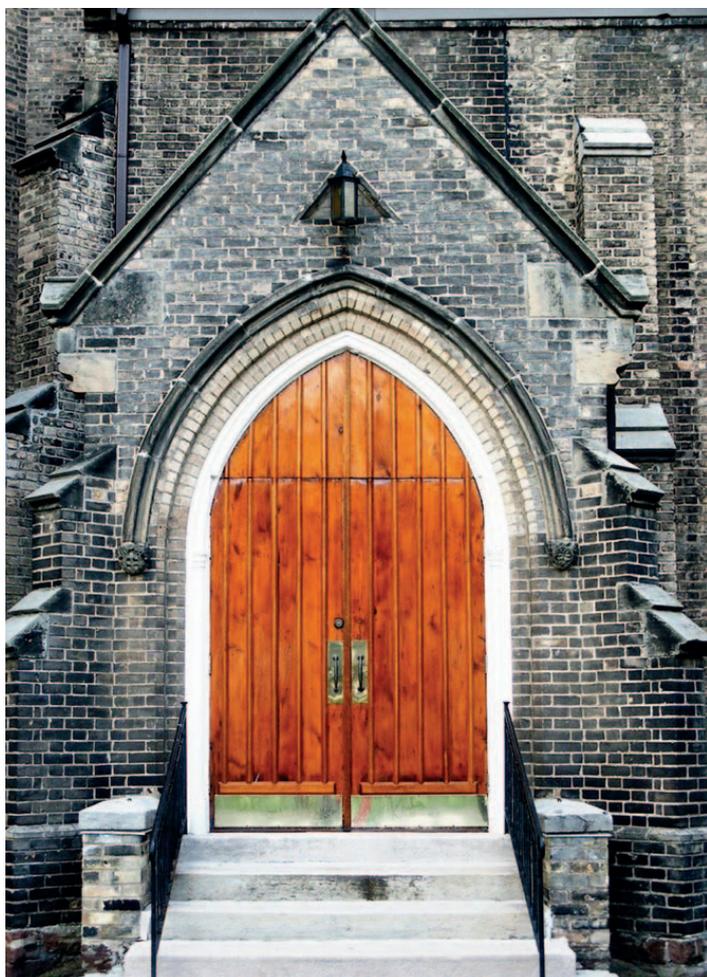




# Recruitment

## Gaining the support for starting a new Conference

If you want to start a new Conference usually the biggest problem you'll have is in persuading parishioners to join. But occasionally, before you even get to that stage, the first hurdle is persuading the Parish Priest to let you conduct an appeal when he's not keen on the idea.



**Thankfully, opposition from Parish Priests is not very common. Most members of the clergy are completely supportive of the SVP and some were even inspired in their vocation through SVP membership in their youth.**

However, if you do face resistance to starting a new Conference, how can you try to gain the support of your Parish Priest? There may be a range of different reasons why a priest is resistant to the idea. Here we look at some of the more common ones and suggest the approach that you can use when responding.

**Negative view: "We don't need the SVP as we already have a parish visiting group."**

**Suggested response:** "The SVP is not the same as a parish visiting group - we do much more and we have a national infrastructure to support our members in their work which a parish visiting group wouldn't have. While we are a spiritual Society, we don't only help parishioners, we help anyone in need in the area irrespective of their faith. We will try to help people whatever their problems are, so as well as visiting people we will provide material assistance where needed."

**Negative view: "We don't need the SVP as we already have the Legion of Mary."**

**Suggested response:** "The SVP is not the same as the Legion of Mary. The Legion does great work providing spiritual support to parishioners. While we will pray with the people we visit if we're asked to, it's not our main purpose. We don't only help parishioners or Catholics - we'll help anyone in need, irrespective of their faith or lack of it - and we'll give practical support where required. For example, we might provide food to someone who needs it, help fill in a form, or assist with some gardening. So we're very different to the Legion of Mary. I think the two organisations complement each other."

**Negative view: "I wouldn't want you to go upsetting the Legion of Mary."**

**Suggested response:** "There is no reason why we should upset the Legion of Mary or vice versa. The two organisations complement each other within a parish - the Legion of Mary very much concentrates on giving spiritual support to parishioners while the SVP gives more practical aid. The two work comfortably together in parishes and often the Legion will refer beneficiaries to the SVP when they see that practical aid is needed."

**Negative view: "Local Conferences have to contribute too much money to the centre - they'd be better off spending it on helping people."**

**Suggested response:** "The SVP is a registered charity and as such it is legally required to provide consolidated annual accounts as well as maintain a database for all members. It also provides a national infrastructure to support members."

## Support of a Parish Priest at a New SVP Conference

This is partially funded by the contribution made by Conferences and also from funds raised nationally. Without this the Society's legal status as a registered charity would be in question and the infrastructure that supports all Conferences and members would not exist. Conferences and their members are better able to help people because of this infrastructure."

**Negative view:** "You're wasting your time having an appeal as our parishioners aren't interested in joining things."

**Suggested response:** "There is real need for the SVP in this parish - there is poverty and loneliness and older parishioners who would benefit from being visited by the SVP. Research has shown that more and more people want to volunteer to help with issues like these but they don't know how. The SVP provides the training and the infrastructure to enable people to donate their time. Maybe that's what's needed in this parish, the SVP to give people the means to give their time. Can't we try? If it doesn't work we haven't lost anything, but if it does work there are people in need in this parish whose lives could be transformed."

**Negative view:** "I don't have time to devote to the SVP, running meetings and stuff."

**Suggested response:** "An SVP Conference in a parish shouldn't impose any extra duties or responsibilities on the Parish Priest - on the contrary, the SVP can help alleviate some of his duties, for example by:

- Visiting sick or elderly parishioners
- Driving sick or elderly parishioners to Mass
- Providing aid to parishioners in need
- Providing assistance to non-parishioners who need it. When the Priest gets a knock on his door from someone seeking help he can refer them to the SVP
- Organising events, parties or outings for older people

- Providing an outlet for parishioners seeking other additional spiritual activity."

**Negative view:** "This is a prosperous area so I doubt there'll be enough for the SVP to do."

**Suggested response:** "There are likely to be older people and lonely people in the parish who would benefit from visits from the SVP and others who need practical assistance. They may not be asking for help but our rules require us to 'seek and find' those in need so if we look for them I have no doubt that we'll find them."

**Negative view:** "We had an SVP group in my last parish and there were all sorts of problems."

**Suggested response:** "I'm sorry to hear about the problems you experienced in your previous parish. It's not representative of the SVP I assure you. Every group or 'Conference' is guided by the Rule & Internal Statutes that stipulate a code of conduct for all members and we are inspired by the life of St Vincent de Paul and Christ himself; so the behaviour you describe is out of character. However, I and other existing members will stay with the new Conference for some time to guide them and make sure they comply with the Vincentian ethos."

### Find our new Fact Sheets

This information is taken from one of the latest in a series of Fact Sheets that aim to solve some of the issues that can arise in relation to member recruitment or the forming of new Conferences. All the Fact Sheets are downloadable from the Recruitment Section in the members' area of the SVP website: [www.svp.org.uk](http://www.svp.org.uk). Take a look - you may find that there is information and ideas that would be useful to all members.

## Spread the Word

future ability to respond to ever-growing need. The campaign included a Recruitment Pack for all Conferences and a new Recruitment Section on the SVP website. Now comes a new initiative, Spread the Word, a regular e-bulletin with recruitment news, tips and ideas. Ideal for any member interested in recruitment, the e-bulletin is particularly recommended for recruiters, District and Central Council officers and Conference Presidents.

But you won't get it automatically. The only way to receive Spread the Word is to register for it. To request the e-bulletin simply email [membership@svp.org.uk](mailto:membership@svp.org.uk) stating "Spread the Word Request" in the subject box and you'll be signed up to receive the first and subsequent issues until you ask for it to end.

Last September the SVP launched Striving for Growth Together, a nationwide recruitment campaign aimed at strengthening the Society's



# Community Support Projects

## Introducing Local Oversight Groups

**One of the key ingredients to developing a successful Community Support Project has always been to establish a local management committee that consists of SVP members with local knowledge, members of the community with relevant skills and local CSP managers responsible for the performance of the projects.** This group has typically been responsible, in varying degrees, for making decisions on future strategy and sometimes more local decisions.

Over the last 12 months a number of things have happened:

- The CSP organisation has moved to a Regional structure.
- A new CSP funding arrangement has been proposed that will create a CSP “development pot” which will help fund new projects from areas that may not have funding encouraging Central Councils to work together across CC boundaries.
- The CSP Committee reviewed its terms of reference and membership.
- One of our most established Management Committees reviewed their responsibilities and suggested a revised Terms

of Reference that recognised who was actually responsible for what, with a requirement to focus on ensuring compliance through local audit.

The term “Local Oversight Group” (LOG) has been adopted to reflect these changes. A Local Oversight Group (LOG) must be established for each Community Support Project (or group of projects).

**What’s changed?** A lot has remained the same, but the main changes are that roles and responsibilities have been clearly defined to reflect the LOG function as primarily an advisory body that monitors and supports performance of project(s), rather than directly managing them.

**Regional Structure:** We have increased the number of regions from 3 to 4 to make the best use of management resources and local knowledge as well as achieving consistency and best practice nationally. We continue to evolve the regional structure to ensure we have the best chance to become sustainable and grow so we can fulfil our objective to help more people in need locally.

## New St Vincent’s in Camberley More than a Charity Shop



Local Oversight Group members

**The information leaflet for the SVP community stores states, ‘our shops look like charity shops, but on closer inspection they are much more’. This is certainly true of the SVPs newest shop that has opened in Camberley, Surrey.**

In 2007, John Looby set up an SVP Conference in Camberley to help people in his local community suffering from poverty. Shortly after, he made his first appeal for a single bed and was inundated with both furniture donations and requests for

furniture. This led to the SVP working with other organisations such as the Camberley Rotary Club and the Frimley Lions to set up a furniture redistribution project that has now grown in the local area. It became apparent that whilst most of the small furniture collected is suitable for the homes of our clients (often temporary council housing), some of the larger items would be better sold to generate income to help the project become self sustaining. Local SVP members Simon Rawlinson, John Clark and John Looby didn’t waste any time and supported this project from the very beginning proving instrumental in the opening of the new Camberley Community Shop and Depot. They have formed what is now the Local Oversight Group and are next looking for ways to expand in the area enabling the sharing of Depot costs and increased efficiency.

The project is now a hub for the furniture redistribution and provision of affordable goods in the community, with a van delivering to those most in need, and a team of committed volunteers growing every day following a recent church appeal. Staff have been amazed by the willingness of people to get involved and feel lucky to be able to help those who help us. Everyone’s lives are better for it!

## Case Study: Volunteer Focus

**Annette first came to Kenton shop in September 2010 when, after a period of unemployment, the Jobcentre asked her to complete a work placement.**

At the time, Annette had been suffering with depression following the death of her husband. She had lost all of her confidence, didn't leave the house much and relied heavily on anti-depressants.

Initially, Annette was very nervous about being on the shop floor, preferring to spend her time cleaning and sorting donations in the stock room. She gradually became more confident and started spending more and more time talking to customers and learning how to use the till. When her placement came to an end, she had enjoyed it so much that she decided to stay on as a volunteer. Over the next few months, Annette continued to grow and learn new skills and put them to good use. In 2011, the Assistant Team Leader of the shop retired and we advertised the vacancy for a replacement. Annette applied. She was interviewed along with the other applicants and it was decided that she was the ideal person for the job!

Now, exactly 5 years later, Annette has started collecting her pension but still loves the job so much that she is continuing to work. Annette has made so many good friends through St



Steve Milburn and Annette Dodsworth at Kenton

Vincent's and hasn't taken an anti-depressant since the day she started at Kenton! Steve Milburn, Business Development Manager for the North East, says "Seeing the positive impact we can have on people's lives like this is what really makes the job worthwhile for me. Annette is a perfect example of why we have Community Shops and this shows how CSPs really do act as an extension of the core work of SVP members".

## Mini Vinnies support Leeds CSP in Sponsored Walk



St Joseph's Mini Vinnies presenting their donation

**For the past 23 years, supporters of the SVP St Jude's Furniture Store in Leeds have arranged a fundraising Sponsored Walk on the Sunday closest to the feast of St Vincent (27th September).**

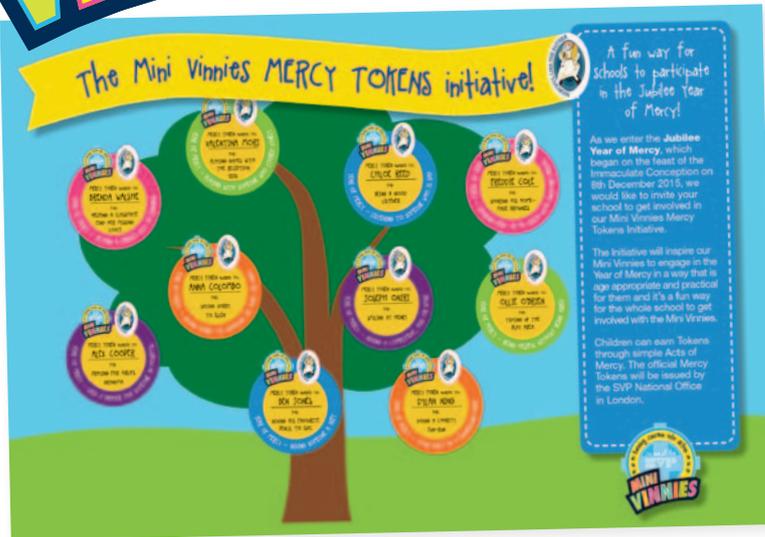
St Jude's has grown in recent years, and the group of SVP Community Support Projects in West Yorkshire now additionally embraces a network of 10 SVP Community Shops across Leeds, Bradford and Wakefield, plus the Furniture Depot and Advice Centre at CHAS@St Vincent's in Bradford. The proceeds of the annual Sponsored Walk are now shared between this group of projects and the SVP St Vincent Support Centre in Leeds, where the team organising the walk is now based. The Walk regularly raises in excess of £10,000 in support of SVP projects, which every year provide emotional, educational and material assistance to around 18,000 disadvantaged citizens across the region.

This year's Walk attracted the record number of 183 participants from across West Yorkshire, including Mini Vinnie groups from several local primary schools. The Mini Vinnies of St Joseph's School in the market town of Wetherby raised the impressive total of £800. The photo shows these hardy walkers presenting their cheque to Paul Grafton, a member of the Walk organising committee under the watchful eye of Head Teacher, Mr Steve Nicholson. These young Vincentians, and their leaders, deserve the highest praise for their dedication to the Vincentian cause.



# Young Vincentians

## Young Vincentians Launch Year of Mercy Initiatives!



**The Mini Vinnies Year of Mercy tokens initiative has kicked off this New Year. It is a fun way for schools to participate in the Jubilee Year of Mercy!**

The initiative will inspire our Mini Vinnies to engage in the Year of Mercy in a way that is age appropriate and practical for them and it's a fun way for the whole school to get involved with the Mini Vinnies. Children can earn tokens through simple Acts of Mercy. The official Mercy Tokens will be issued by the SVP National Office in London.

Watch out for how our Mini Vinnies will be engaging in the Year of Mercy!

## Annual Coffee Morning Raising Funds For Young Vincentians

**This year, we are bumping up the “fun levels” of our nation-wide fundraising activity (yes that’s everyone from 7 years old to 77 years old and beyond!), traditionally called the “National Coffee Morning”, in which we would love you to participate.**

The Society has often celebrated the birthday of Bl. Frédéric Ozanam on 23rd April with the ‘Coffee morning’, so doing something on, or as close to that date as possible would be a really great reason to celebrate our Founder’s Day! So what exactly are Conferences across the whole of England and Wales raising funds for with this year’s Coffee Morning?

Last year, we used the £6,000 you raised for the coffee morning in writing the spiritual reflection guide (or liturgical resources for want of a better word) for Year C, for our Youth SVP groups! This year, we need to write the remaining years: A & B. It costs us £7,500 to write, edit, design and print a spiritual reflection guide for one year. That means we need to raise £15,000 from this year’s coffee morning in order to make the July printing deadline. The SVP wishes to form young people who are not only passionate about helping people in need in their local

communities, but who are able to explore their faith in a supportive environment. Investing in producing material now, will bear great fruits in our young people of the future! We can provide balloons and posters with blank spaces for you to be creative, spontaneous, and run any fundraising activity of your choice (as it doesn’t have to be a coffee morning)! Can you help us by holding a fundraising event in your parish? Whether that be a ‘Tea and Toast’ fundraiser or a ‘CakeFest’, an ‘Easter Egg Hunt’, a ‘Blessed Frédéric’s Birthday Bash’ or the traditional ‘Coffee Morning’ in true SVP style, it’ll be great fun for a great cause! The world’s your oyster! We highly recommend that you get in touch with your local Youth SVP or B-Attitude group to get involved in your fundraising event!

If all SVP Conferences in England and Wales made efforts to raise £50 in a fundraiser, we would more than cover the costs of our liturgical resources! Any surplus of funds will be injected into producing our seasonal resources (like Lent and Advent) for Mini Vinnies, Youth SVP and SVP B-Attitude. Don’t forget to send us your stories with photographs, we’d definitely love to share them. The Young Vincentians team thank you for all your support of us, and we hold you all in prayer.

Coffee morning information packs and poster are available from the Young Vincentian Team and National Office on **020 7703 3030**.

# Young Vincentians

## Westminster SVP 1833 Group Celebrates 5th Birthday

Spring 2016 sees the Westminster Young Adult group celebrate its fifth birthday. In 2011 a group of young Catholics working in central London established an SVP Conference that allowed them to put SVP ideals into action.



Members of the Westminster 1833 Group celebrating their 5th anniversary

Founding President Suzy Wood said, "Regular SVP groups meet weekly: we meet regularly but are unable to meet weekly due to work commitments."

Activities include work for the homeless and the elderly through local centres, and other causes for those in need. Situated in Victoria, homeless centre 'The Passage' is one charity all members have been able to help, such as preparing breakfast or fundraising. Other activities have included supporting the drop-in centre at St Patrick's, Soho, supporting the rehabilitation activity that Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT) undertakes, and preparing backpacks with school supplies for development charity Mary's Meals.

Members say the chance to meet for prayer and fellowship sustains them in their activity and inspires them to do more. Whilst some members have moved on from the group following moves or changes, new ones have joined too.

New members are always welcome!  
To find out more contact Philip Worley  
on email [philip.worley@gmail.com](mailto:philip.worley@gmail.com)  
or telephone **07866 628191**

## A great year for the Mini Vinnies

Mini Vinnies from St Mary and St Joseph's Primary School, Pocklington, Yorkshire had a very productive first year, 2015.

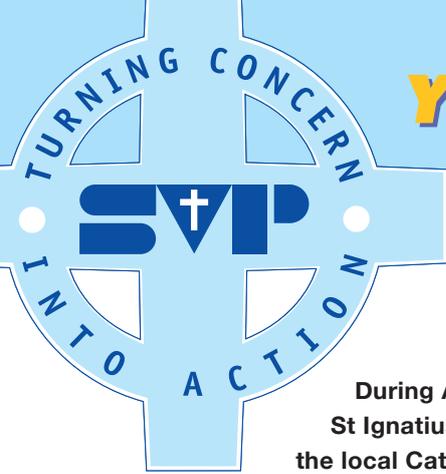
They made Easter cards for the sick and housebound and started a foodbank. Pupils meet regularly and pray and talk together. Their raffle went very well and created excitement across the whole school. They also held a very popular stall at the school's Summer Fayre.



Mini Vinnies taking food to care centre, and at Summer Fayre



The Mini Vinnies raffle caused great stir



## Wonderful Atmosphere

During Advent, members from St Ignatius, Ossett SVP Conference asked the local Catholic primary school, St Ignatius Primary, if they would like to collect food to build hampers for people in need in their local community.

The Head teacher was very supportive of the idea. Each child was asked to bring in one item each to make a hamper per class. The response was overwhelming. The small school of five classes made ten generous sized hampers. The atmosphere within school amongst the children when building the hampers was wonderful. St Ignatius Conference distributed the hampers just before Christmas and they were gratefully received. The school are now hoping to establish it as a tradition and have invited an SVP Minnie Vinnie rep to come into school to discuss what is involved in setting up a Young Vincentians Group.



Children from St Ignatius Primary School helped with hampers

## Youth SVP: Blessed Edward Oldcorne Catholic College visits residential home



On Thursday 17th of December 2015, students from the Youth SVP at Blessed Edward Oldcorne College visited Latimer Court Rest Home in Worcester to entertain the elderly and spread some Christmas joy.

They were warmly welcomed by the staff and the lovely residents, who are in the dementia unit of the Rest Home. They showed students into the community room, which had a Christmassy and joyful atmosphere. This helped them get into the Christmas spirit. Everyone was very excited to perform the

Christmas carols which they had been rehearsing for a number of weeks. The residents joined in too. To see their faces brighten up and burst into a smile when they recognized the familiar carol tunes was a real joy for all the students.

Josna and Alina, two Indian students, sang the Hail Mary in Malayalam, their native tongue. They astonished the audience with another of their beautiful songs, which was an Indian Christmas carol. Oliver, a Year 7 student made everybody's faces light up with his hilarious Christmas cracker jokes. Other students demonstrated their skills by playing instrumental Christmas songs on the violin, piano and mouth organ. Once again, Liberty Deaville, a Year 9 student was kind enough to bake delicious cakes for the residents.

They remarked that Liberty's cakes and a cup of tea were a perfect way to finish the performance.

One of the students' favourite moments was when the group sang, 'This little light of mine', which is their College Hymn. A massive thank you to Mrs Win Taylor for helping once again to organise such a memorable and heartwarming event. Hannah Veccepure and Ximei Liu - Year 11 Youth SVP members.



Pupils visit Latimer Court for Christmas carols with the residents

## Local SVP Parish and Youth Conferences join forces



Pupils from Oakland's School together with Residents from Burrows Day Centre

**Oaklands RC School in Waterlooville, Hampshire have for many years run a Youth Conference, that was founded by former RE teacher David Caswell.**

When David retired in 2009 the running of the Conference was taken over by head of RE, Debbie Palfreyman, who continued weekly visits to one of the local day centres with students while further links were made with the neighbouring Catholic primary school. The school is situated within the parish of The Sacred Heart of Jesus and St Peter the Apostle and in 2010 parish priest, Fr Kevin Bidgood, asked one of his parishioners, Marion Binks (coincidentally a former teacher at Oaklands) if she would be

happy to form a parish Conference which she subsequently did and it continues to flourish with 11 full and 2 associate members.

For the past two years both the school and parish Conference have worked together at times. Just before Christmas the parish Conference President, Martin Lewis, attended the party organised by the school SVP group for local people from the Burrows Day Centre. He led a sing-a-long while the Oaklands students served the visitors tea and mince pies. Christmas jokes from Martin along with a game of bingo led by the students completed an enjoyable couple of hours for their visitors.



Mini Vinnies from St John the Evangelist Primary School serving tea after Nativity play

### Nativity & Hospitality

Before Christmas the Mini Vinnie group from St John the Evangelist Primary School in Bridgnorth invited their local SVP Conference to bring some of their older parishioners to see the school's Nativity play.

The parishioners were treated to afternoon tea provided and served by the pupils. In October the Conference took some of the Mini Vinnies to visit the house-bound parishioners who really enjoyed meeting the pupils.





## Raising Awareness of the SVP in Redcar



Members, staff and volunteers from the SVP Community shop in Redcar entered a decorated SVP Christmas tree in the Christmas Tree Festival at St Hilda's Church to reach out into the Community at the start of Pope Francis's Holy Year of Mercy, raising awareness of the SVP.

This was at the invitation of Sister Anita who serves with the Anglican Ministry Team at St Hilda's and St Cuthbert's Kirkleatham. OHP Sisters (The Order of the Holy Paraclete, an Anglican religious order for women) have been resident in Dormantown since August 2009, working in the parishes of Kirkleatham and Redcar, an area of high unemployment and considerable social need. Pictured is Margaret Clark SVP Middlesbrough District President with the Archbishop of York Dr John Sentamu embarking on a six-month Pilgrimage of Prayer, Witness and Blessing in the Diocese of York from Advent 2015 to Trinity 2016.

## The ingenious idea of the Giving Tree

On 19th December 2015 fifteen members from Northampton Sacred Heart Conference put together 49 hampers for people in need. As Advent began, the Conference wrote lots of gift tags specifying the items needed for the hampers and hung them on the branches of a small 'Giving Tree', (from a member's garden) which they put up in the Church.

Parishioners contributed / financed the dry goods by taking tags off the Giving Tree and bringing back the items. SVP members stapled a gift aid envelope to the tags saying 'donation', allowing people to donate money if preferred. This was used to buy additional dry goods and to fund the £10 donation added to each hamper, along with an SVP Christmas card. The Conference also provided a wrapped present for every child.

Local wholesaler HG Collins Fresh Produce provided the fresh fruit and veg. Their van arrived and, once unloaded, members set to work putting the fruit and veg into plastic bags to go in the hampers. David Collins and his team plus Plastek UK of Mansfield made generous donations for which the Conference is grateful.



Northampton SVP members putting together hampers

## Wedding Bells!



Our Lady and St Alphege Conference, Bath celebrated the weddings of two Conference members last summer. Ciara Molloy, Conference Treasurer, is the new Ciara Fraser, and Sarah Powell, the Conference's newest member, is the new Sarah Forster. Congratulations to both!

## Hymns abounding in Beaconsfield



**St Teresa's Beaconsfield SVP Conference organised a Service of Hymns and Readings on Monday 23rd November 2015 at St Teresa's Church.**

The service was led by Fr Henry Sanni, ably assisted by Fr Michael Ajoyi and Deacon Michael Phelan. Invitations were sent out to other churches in Beaconsfield and other SVP Conferences in the diocese. The service was rather moving as stories of refugees were read as well as Bible readings. At one point Fr Henry sang a song in his native Nigerian. An opportunity to donate to the refugees was made in the form of a retiring collection after the Service.

Pictured: Fr Henry singing at the St Teresa's Refugee prayer service.

### Coming Together



The SVP Conference at Holy Cross, Bedford held their Christmas lunch on Saturday 8th January for all the older people in the parish whom members help throughout the year. The event has been very popular over the past few years and is very much appreciated. It provides an opportunity to come together and enjoy a Christmas lunch with those the Conference helps and visits. This year parish priest Fr Jonathon joined members with twenty five other parishioners for the event.

## Christmas Cheer!

**Regulars at the St. Teresa's SVP Conference in Beaconsfield Tuesday mornings 'Coffee & Company' enjoyed a full Christmas lunch with all the trimmings on Tuesday 15th December 2015.**

Also invited were residents at the care homes where the SVP organise 'Word & Communion'. Over 60 guests sat down to a traditional turkey dinner with Christmas pudding, mince pies and trifle as dessert.

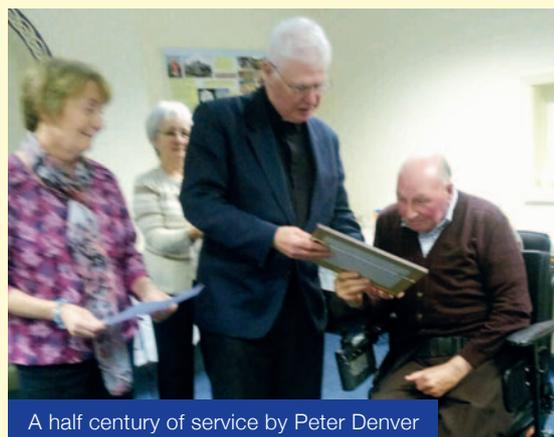


Beaconsfield colourful Christmas lunch

## A Half Century of Service

**On Sunday 22nd November 2015 members of St Anthony's SVP in Onchan, Isle of Man surprised member Peter Denver with a presentation to celebrate his 50 years as a Vincentian.**

Peter was presented with a medal and certificate by Monsignor John Devine and St Anthony's Conference President Joan Corran. Peter's wife Evelyn was not forgotten as she was presented with a bouquet of flowers. During Peter's 50 years of SVP service he was District President for the Isle of Man and hosted a National Conference on the island which is still fondly remembered by older members of the SVP in the UK. SVP members in the Isle of Man thanked Peter for his help and support over the years.



A half century of service by Peter Denver



## Family Celebrations

**Tony McGuigan, of Holy Cross and St Francis Walmley Conference, Sutton Coldfield recently received the UBI Caritas Award.**

This was awarded to him from the Archbishop of Birmingham, Bernard Longley. The award was to recognise the work that Tony has done for many years within the SVP and also for his services to local education within Sutton Coldfield as a Chair of Governors. Tony received the award from the Vicar General Monsignor Timothy Menezes on behalf of Archbishop Longley. Tony, who is pictured receiving the award with his family, was very humbled to receive the award and wanted to give particular praise to his wife Michelle and also his children Niamh, Shay and Michael for the unwavering support they provide Tony to allow him to give his time freely for this special role. Tony said "It is a great privilege to receive this award and I feel it is a family award to us all."



Tony McGuigan with his family

## A Magnificent Effort

**SVP Conference St Albans Macclesfield held its annual Christmas Hamper event on December 16th for the families that they visit each month, and also for the families of schoolchildren from their local Catholic Primary School, who requested assistance.**

Members managed to fill 78 large cartons (hampers) with a range of tinned food, biscuits, crisps, soft drinks, cakes, breakfast cereals, and other items purchased by the SVP in a local store in Macclesfield. Toys donated by St Albans Church parishioners were also added to the hampers for all the children. These hampers were then distributed to the various families by volunteers from the SVP and also assistance from the School. It was a magnificent effort all round and a notable increase on last year's 59 hampers distributed.

## Congratulations Chris!



Chris Quinn has been a member of the Tilehurst SVP for 58 years and in recognition of Chris's incredibly long service he was presented with a special certificate and a celebration cake on Sunday 4th October 2015.

The presentation was made by Canon Michael Dennehy following Mass at St Joseph's Catholic Church in Tilehurst. Jack Ewin, President of the Tilehurst SVP, also gave a very nice speech which included details of the many acts of kindness and generosity that Chris has provided to people in need in previous years. There were members of the SVP at the presentation together with a large number of the congregation and some members of Chris's family and friends.

## Age is no barrier...

**The St Thomas of Canterbury, Sevenoaks Conference has a very special member. Douglas Augustine Darcy was born in St John's, Newfoundland in August 1918 and is now their oldest SVP member at 97 years old.** He is a Rhodes Scholar and got his Doctorate (DPhil) in Biological Science at Oxford Balliol College. His career was in Cancer research at the Institute of Cancer Research, London. Douglas has been a member since the first meeting of the SVP in St Thomas of Canterbury, Sevenoaks which took place on 11th November 1992 and was Treasurer until 2013. Douglas says of the SVP "It fulfils my obligation to do something for the poor. I like the people in the SVP." When asked what he enjoys most about being an SVP member Douglas responded "Not in it for the enjoyment!" Douglas has been an inspiration for many other members and continues to serve with commitment and dedication.



Douglas Darcy

## Praying for Refugees

Members of St Mary's Conference in the parish of Our Lady of the Annunciation in King's Lynn came together with parishioners on December 10 2015 to pray for refugees. The Vigil opened with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and closed with Benediction. The Service was led by priest, Father Henry and Deacon

John. Quiet moments in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament provided space for reflection. On that same day, news was broadcast of a family from Syria who lost their lives in a desperate attempt to find a new and better life outside their own country; a mother and seven children, the eldest 9 years and the youngest 20 days, all were drowned, a sorrowful husband left bereft. With these thoughts members and parishioners quietly went home.

## Retired but not tired - receiving the papal medal

Frank Greene, who recently retired as President of the SVP Conference of St Dunstan's, Woking, was given the Bene Merenti medal from Pope Francis. The citation covered contribution to parish life, not least his 20 years' service as SVP Conference President. Frank has stayed on as a member continuing to take a full and active part in the Conference. Frank was presented with the medal by parish priest Canon Frank Harrington.



Frank Greene with parish priest, Canon Frank Harrington

## Sad Goodbyes



SVP members from St George's Conference, Norwich were very sad to say goodbye to fellow members Michael and Mary Howlings who moved away at the end

of last year. Conference President Jim McTavish said: "I have known Mike to be a very forthright man who always stated clearly what he thinks. He served in many capacities as an SVP member and he is sincere and honest. Mary also has been a faithful servant of the Lord."

Pictured: President Jim McTavish with Mary and Mike Howlings.

## Generous donation from amateur boxer



Amateur boxer Jess Poxon donated her £100 prize money, won at a boxing tournament for disabled people in Derbyshire, to her local SVP Conference, Christ the King and St Patrick and St Bridget in Clay Cross, Alfreton.

Jess presented the cheque to Father Jim O'Hanlon after being impressed by the work her Conference did for her local community.

Pictured: Jess hands donation for SVP Conference to parish priest, Fr Jim

## Candles and Prayers for refugees

St David and St Patrick's Conference, Haverfordwest held a candle lit prayer vigil and Holy Hour for migrants and refugees on Sunday 17th of January. A brief introduction took place, followed by readings, hymns, prayers and ending with Benediction led by their spiritual director Father Liam Bradley. It was well attended and enjoyed by all.



## Over 70s Christmas lunch and long service certificate

On 16th December 2015 St Joseph's Conference, Aylesbury, treated 30 older people to Christmas lunch which was enjoyed by all. Also in attendance was Father Christmas giving out presents.

Parish priest Fr John Beirne presented Frank O'Brien, a long serving member with a certificate for 60 years of service. Frank is now 85 years old and still a serving member since joining the SVP in 1955 in Manchester.



St Peter's Conference reaching out

## Generosity worth thousands

Twenty members from St Peter's SVP Conference, Winchester have been distributing food parcels at Christmas to families and single people in need, the homeless, those living in hostels, and asylum seekers for more than a decade. In 2015 they more than doubled the number distributed, to the value of £2400. President Audrey Atter said: "None of this would have been possible without the generosity of the parishioners of Hampshire Downs and the support of our Parish Priest. Not only is it a service to the poor, but it brings the SVP to public notice".



## Visiting our Twins

In the last 2 weeks of January four members made a visit to our Twins in India. Terry Brown and Marie Branch visited the northeast of the country, while Adrian Abel, our National President, and myself, Stephen Hogg, Twinnage Officer for Portsmouth CC, visited the southern Indian States of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and the city of Mangalore.



Handing sewing machine to beneficiary

**These visits are made every three years with the purpose of further developing our relationship with our Indian members, in particular the new Indian National President, Johnson Varghese, and his National Council members, who have just completed the first year of their six year term.**

We also wanted to see some of the projects that we have funded in recent years, while trying to resolve issues that have been highlighted in correspondence. Such visits allow us to see with our own eyes how the money is spent in India, an increasing statutory requirement for charities sending money abroad.

We attended 15 CC meetings as well as a number of Conference meetings. At some meetings there were over 100 people present, and they always started with prayer, often sung! The clergy, who were often very young, were very involved and supportive of the Society's work in India. At nearly all our meetings there was a priest present, who knew in detail what their Conference was doing for the poor and needy in their parishes. Likewise, we met six Bishops, who all clearly saw the Society as a major asset in their work with the poor in their Dioceses.

The Indian CCs generally meet monthly, and sometimes fortnightly when they are managing big projects like the building of homes for the aged. It is not unusual for there to be a Conference operating in every single parish in a CC area! One member was celebrating having started his ninetieth Conference! In the south the average number of members in a Conference

is about 15, compared with about 8 in this country. Members seem willing to stand for office in a Conference and see it as an honour, not a burden. We visited several projects, one of the biggest being the Ozanam Education Centre, funded by Shrewsbury CC, where they teach tailoring skills, and computer skills to young people in the Thuckalay area. We visited homes for the elderly and destitute, all funded by the Society, and even stayed in one of them for a couple of nights. At some of the meetings Adrian and I were asked to distribute sewing machines that were given as part of a revolving project, and we also gave out student sponsorships to candidates, as well as Jubiloans for small businesses.

There is an assumption in our country that most Indians speak English, and while it is used as a language to link people across the country, at the local level in Southern India, very few people speak, let alone write the language. They often have to rely on the priest translating English letters into the local language which in Tamil Nadu is Tamil, and in Kerala Malayalam. This makes correspondence with Twins difficult. We were also warned that the postal system in India is often unreliable. To overcome this problem the Indian National President is insisting that all his CC presidents communicate by email rather than hard copy. Some Conferences complained of lack of correspondence, but we discovered that this was often where the Twin had gone into abeyance in our country.

In summary, we found the work of the Indian Society to be 'inspiring'. Their commitment to the work of the Society, and enthusiasm in very difficult circumstances, was apparent for all to see.



Conference Twin of English Martyrs, Reading



## in India

We spent quite a lot of time with their National President and his National Council members, both formally and socially, and have certainly enhanced our relationship with them. Members in India feel close to their brothers and sisters in England and Wales, and everywhere we went they insisted we thank all the Conferences who contribute. Even in the most remote parts, Conferences confirmed they are getting their grants. These grants help them to serve some very poor families in a country with almost no welfare provision, so the Society 'adopts' families and provides them with the bare basics needed to live. In rural communities the daily wage rate is £2.50 per day at most and that is if you can get work.

Another area where Conferences make a difference is help with medication for those suffering from cancer. With no National Health Service, only the better off can afford the good treatment available to those who can pay. Secondly, although we have ceased raising money for the Jubiloan, this scheme has been a great success and the money is still 'revolving'. They estimated that 95% of recipients pay back their loans, which have been used to finance shops, garment making, purchasing pigs, cows and fowl. The Society in India was doing microfinancing before it became a well-recognised way of raising people out of poverty, and we saw just how successful it has been. All who have visited India and seen the work of the SVP first hand have been overwhelmed by the care and consideration given by our Brothers and Sisters in helping the most needy in their communities with regular support of food and essentials, help with the costs of medication and with school fees for the very poorest families so their children can get an education and a future.

Conferences in better off areas such as the cities are now starting to support the poorer Conferences through some internal twinning, but most of our Twins are in areas of desperate need and so the grants we send them are of immense value to the poorest of the poor. In fact, more Twins are desperately needed. Until 5 years ago Twins of Conferences in abeyance or who could not pay were the responsibility of the CC or DC until a new Twin was found. There is a 5 year limit on this kind of support and so we are now faced with a number of Twins which the CC or DC is no longer obliged to support.

If your Conference or DC could take on another Twin, or if individual benefactors would be able to support a Twin for a limited period this will prevent us from having to withdraw our support from the most needy in India and our other Twin countries.



A small shop funded by SVP

*Stephen Hogg*

### Indian SVP Facts and Stats

The SVP was introduced into Pondicherry by missionaries between 1852-53, but was first officially recognised in 1863 when Conferences in Bombay were aggregated. The Superior (later National) Council of India was established in November 1953.

Prof. Johnson Verghese is the 13th National President whose term of office began on 28th February, 2015.

There are 7125 Conferences in India (cf England & Wales 1039). These are broken down into 5672 mixed Conferences, 1052 Ladies Conferences and 401 Youth Conferences.

There are 82 Central Councils in 6 regions.

Just over half the members live in Kerala.

In 2015, there were 65,748 members. The average members per Conference is around 9 people.

3312 Conferences in India are Twinned, 1531 with England & Wales, 1419 with Australia and 303 with Scotland. Other countries include the Netherlands (33), USA (13), Canada (8) and Italy (5). Only 47% of Conferences have Twins.

India has a population of 1.3 billion making it the second most populous country in the world, behind China.

With 1,269,346 square miles India is the 7th largest country in the world.

Indian Gross National Income (2014) was 1610 USD per annum. (UK is 42,690 USD).



# Behind the Scenes

## Behind the Scenes at National Office

Our 'Who's Who at National Office' feature last summer received such a positive response from members that we are introducing a new feature entitled 'Behind the Scenes at National Office', focusing on a different department in each edition. Here we speak to CEO Elizabeth Palmer, and Deputy CEO Kate Nightingale about what it's like managing the SVP.



**Elizabeth has been CEO since joining the SVP 16 years ago. She juggles a busy and diverse role with being a wife, and a mum to her three year old daughter.**

Her role involves supporting the Board, informing the strategy for the Society, managing the staffed operations, working with the

National President to ensure good governance, compliance with external regulation, and managing the organisation as a whole in line with the strategic plan. While Elizabeth does not manage the members she does offer advice to members which covers legal, policy and best practice. She describes herself and her staff as "holding together the infrastructure in which members work, and providing a service to members". For Elizabeth the "meeting of minds" she finds at the SVP contributes to her enjoyment of the role. She says that members and committed staff tend to have a similar mind-set; concern for people in need, motivation to help others and a sense of vocation. The challenges of her role include finding a balance between ensuring legal compliance and providing an efficient service to the membership, which is enabling, rather than obstructing to the membership. Being under resourced is a key challenge. As is making the whole organisation - with its membership side and community projects side - feel like a harmonious entity.

Asked what she loves about her job, Elizabeth says it's the variety and diversity. In the week of writing, she assessed four law-firms who were tendering for legal services in line with the SVP's procurement policy, finalised outstanding Board papers, met with the chair of the Youth Development Committee to discuss a grant, attended the SVP Board meeting, conducted a meeting with Investors In People, liaised with a law firm about a ongoing case, held interviews for a vacant post, and met with a member of staff who had tendered their resignation.

The rewards are the experience of the SVP itself. I am a great admirer of our members and staff. I am quite a passionate advocate of what the SVP does, whether I am talking to other charities, or to funders."

**Kate Nightingale is Deputy CEO and has been with the SVP for 5 years. For the last 2 years Kate has been responsible for the Community Support Projects (CSPs) arm of the SVP, which employs over 200 staff and 470 volunteers.**

This involves overseeing the management and development of 40 Community Shops, 8 Furniture Stores, 2 Approved Premises, 3 Supported Accommodation and 2 Advice and Support centres. The diversity and the national spread of these projects mean that Kate depends on her teams' local expertise to manage the day to day running of projects.

One of the challenges of the job, says Kate, is "ensuring projects are economically viable and, in the case of shops, generate a profit for the Society while ensuring that we keep our primary purpose in mind "to serve those in need locally". A key part of this is making difficult decisions about the organisational structure and the people within it. "Making decisions about people's futures is never easy. I try always to keep the SVP values at the heart of what I do," she says.

Asked what goes on a typical day at work she responds, "I wish there was a typical day! It's the variety in the role that really keeps me on my toes". Kate is based in London but the projects, and her team, are all around the country so a typical day involves lots of emails and phone calls as well as train travel. Kate says that her role is a real team effort; "I never cease to be amazed by the commitment and energy of the staff and members in the SVP".

Her favourite memories include "every SVP Christmas thanksgiving service. Working with a great group of people remind me of what's important in life".



Catch the next 'Behind the Scenes' feature in the Summer Edition of Vincentian Concern!

## Depaul UK: Helping young people without a home

In this feature Vincentian Concern looks at another Vincentian charity, Depaul UK, which is part of the Vincentian family of charities with a focus on young people in crisis and beyond. Depaul launched 25 years ago and in 2014, their 200 staff and 300 volunteers worked with 3,720 people to change their lives for the better.

Young people without a place to call home have found themselves increasingly running out of options - with the outcome that they can end up sleeping rough.

Nightstop - an initiative run by homelessness charity Depaul UK - provides a practical, short-term solution to this problem. A network of 33 accredited Nightstop services throughout the UK provides safe emergency accommodation in volunteers' homes for homeless young people aged from 16 to 25. Depaul UK President Sir Trevor McDonald said: "Nightstop is a community response to a problem which is all too common in our community. This unique service is made possible by the generosity of inspirational people with a spare room and a desire to make a difference in a young person's life."

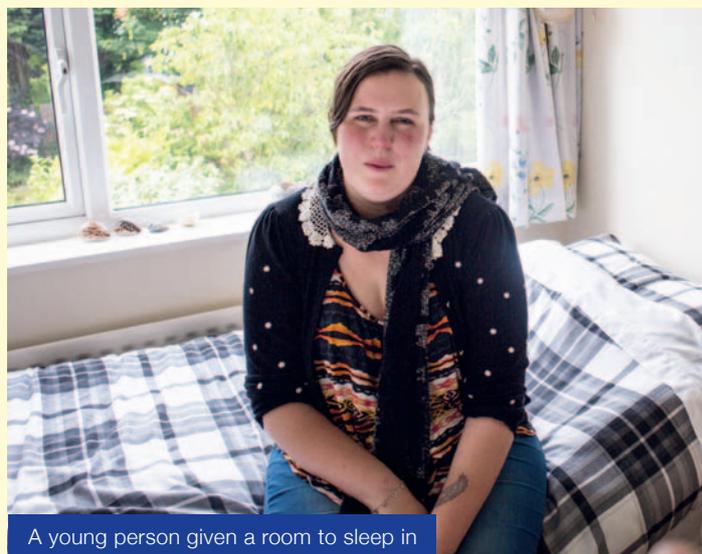
Yvonne Jones, Depaul UK's Community Host Manager for London, said that Nightstop provides a bed for the night for "young people who need it in a moment of crisis". She said:

“ It provides a safety net to those forced to leave their home, placing young people in a safe and warm home for the night that has been provided by a vetted and approved volunteer. ”

"Nightstop prevents young people from sleeping rough, 'sofa surfing', or staying in unsuitable accommodation where they might be at risk of abuse. The use of spare rooms in a positive environment makes a huge difference to young people in crisis."

Nightstop is run by communities and charities around the UK. And as well as coordinating the network, Depaul UK runs the Nightstop services in the North East and Cumbria, London and Oldham. As with all the work that Depaul UK does for the homeless, Nightstop is rooted in its Vincentian values: celebrating the potential of people; believing in rights and responsibilities; aiming to take a wider role in civil society, and putting our words into action.

Nightstop provides more than 13,500 bed-nights a year, helping to change the lives of thousands of young people in their hour of need. But there is still much to be done. Sadly, the need for the service is growing, partly because of governmental



A young person given a room to sleep in

spending cuts. More Nightstop hosts are needed to meet the increased demand. Domestic violence is one reason why young people leave home - and can find themselves struggling to find somewhere safe to stay.

Seventeen-year-old Anita, for instance, was forced to spend several nights on the streets because of violence at home. At first, she slept on friends' sofas but, as time went on, it became harder and harder to find someone to put her up. She ended up sleeping rough on the street - to avoid having to return home to a violent welcome. A youth centre referred Anita to Nightstop and it changed the direction of her life. She ended up spending three nights with a Nightstop host before a long-term answer to her housing issue was found. Eventually, she found a permanent home and was able to rebuild her life.

Nightstop is a unique service because it is able to place young people in real homes rather than hostels or institutions. The hosts are a network of people across the UK who are willing to take in a young person for a night.

Ms Jones added: "Although we cover our hosts' costs of meals, toiletries and other items they need to buy for the person staying with them, their generosity of spirit and willingness to show young people that home can be a warm, welcoming and loving place is a huge part of what makes Nightstop so special. Many young people have never known such a caring environment or sat down before to a proper family dinner."

If you are interested in becoming a Nightstop host, please contact Ian Forster, Nightstop's Support and Development Manager, on **07918 904661** or email: [ian.forster@depaulcharity.org.uk](mailto:ian.forster@depaulcharity.org.uk)

Ollie Wilson, Depaul UK



# Fundraising

## Getting you up to date

There have been a number of developments, outlined below, which will impact members. A new legacy policy and the coffee morning fundraiser on Founders day, plus leaving a legacy to the SVP are all areas which involve members. We also have a couple of exciting announcements, featuring a new grant and the roll out of the Big Mile walk across more Central Councils this summer.

## New Legacy Policy in place as of January 2016!

The legacy policy was updated by the Board in December 2015 to address the issue of high reserves in the Society. The SVP currently holds around £4.47 million in free reserves, much of which is held in Conference and Council accounts. Nearly £1.5m of these reserves are sitting unused in legacy accounts. This may be considered to contravene the Charity Commission's best practice on holding cash reserves and the new policy will help us release the funds, as the donors would have wished. Conferences are being contacted and asked to form a plan in how to spend the legacy within a maximum of five years.

New legacies over £5000 will now be subject to an increased support charge. An additional 10% will be split between Young Vincentians and a new Community Support Projects development fund. This will allow us to invest in these two areas which are both growing fast.

The new policy can be found on the website at: <http://svp.org.uk/Members-ResourcesandForms>. If you would like some more information on the new policy and how it may affect your Conference, please get in touch with Bryan Allen, SVP Fundraising Manager at [Bryana@svp.org.uk](mailto:Bryana@svp.org.uk) or call 0207 703 3030.



## Don't forget the Coffee Morning!

April 23rd is both the birthday of Frédéric Ozanam and the date that the SVP was founded. It is traditional to hold a coffee morning around this time to raise funds for our Young Vincentians.

We want to produce new spiritual resources for teenagers to transform their lives and encourage them to get out and serve their local communities.

This is an exciting new initiative that we believe can have a huge impact. If you don't want to hold a coffee morning, why not organise a bake-off? Or a quiz, or a cheese and wine party? More ideas are available from National Office.

We have posters and packs that you can order for free by calling National Office or by emailing [youngvincentians@svp.org.uk](mailto:youngvincentians@svp.org.uk)

## LET'S MAKE THIS THE MOST SUCCESSFUL YEAR EVER!

PERSONALISE YOUR POSTER!

A CLEAR DESCRIPTION OF WHAT THE EVENT IS IN AID OF

POP THIS POSTER UP ON YOUR PARISH NOTICEBOARD

## Leave a Gift to Your Favourite Catholic Cause!

The SVP is working with 25 other Catholic charities to help spread the word about the importance of leaving a gift to Catholic causes. This legacy consortium, called Your Catholic Legacy, began in 2013.



Together we have a website with all the information you need on how to leave a gift in your Will, information about all the charities involved and how your gift will impact and support the work of your Catholic charities for future generations.

For many charities today, legacy giving makes up a major part of funds raised to support their cause. In fact, £2bn a year is raised through legacy giving. Any SVP Conference who has been left a legacy will be able to tell you how much work is achievable with a gift, large or small.

Your Catholic Legacy (YCL) has a free magazine, calendar and leaflets available which the National Office would be happy to send out to those who are interested in learning more about Your Catholic Legacy and leaving a gift to a Catholic cause. Furthermore, on 11th June, YCL are holding a special event at Southwark Cathedral, with a Mass at 12.30pm celebrated by the Archbishop of Southwark, the Most Revd Peter Smith. This will be followed by guest speakers on the importance of supporting Catholic causes and the major role which legacy giving plays.

You should have received a special leaflet about legacies with your copy of the Vincentian Concern. If you have perhaps been considering writing a Will or adding a codicil, then you might find the leaflet helpful.



Archbishop Peter Smith at YCL event

For more information on the Your Catholic Legacy Mass or how to get your hands on a Your Catholic Legacy magazine, leaflet and calendar, please get in touch with Bryan Allen at National Office at [Bryana@svp.org.uk](mailto:Bryana@svp.org.uk) or call **0207 703 3030**.

## The Big Mile Update

**THE  
BIG  
MILE**

STEP OUT  
AGAINST POVERTY

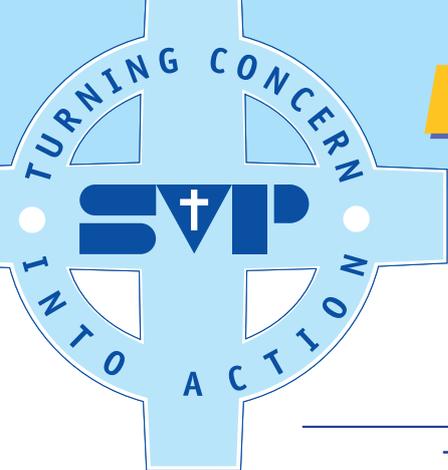
Following the successful pilot held last year in Shrewsbury and Cardiff CCs we are holding more Big Mile walks across Shrewsbury, Tyne, Westminster, Southwark, Manchester, Arundel and Brighton.

The walks will take place at the end of June or beginning of July. As per last year,

the walks will be carried out in collaboration with various CSAN partner organisations. This is a great chance to raise the profile of the SVP, build community in your local parish and raise funds. If you would like to get involved please contact your CC president.

## Major Funding Success!

Our fundraisers at National Office recently scored a big win in an application to the Mercers' Company for a grant to support our new B-Attitude project for the Young Vincentians. Mercers loved the project and awarded us a grant of £45,000. With this funding under our belts we can now go out to other trusts and apply for further grants. In the UK charity sector, the value of donations and grants from trusts grew by 45% between 2010 and 2013, increasing to £4.9 billion from £3.4 billion. Given the level of funds available, we hope to grow SVP trust income over the coming years.



# Health and Safety

## Tips for Health

The Society is always striving to help members do things safely procedures in place to assist members carry out the work they do safely.

### FOODBORNE ILLNESS (FOOD POISONING) IS SERIOUS BUSINESS:



Foodborne illness can strike anyone. However, some people are at a higher risk for developing foodborne illness. These include pregnant women, young children, older adults and people with weakened immune systems. If you or someone you care for or prepare food for are in one of these at-risk groups, it's important to pay extra attention to handling food safely. **You can reduce foodborne illness by following these four easy steps:**

#### Be Food Safe



### STEP 1: CLEAN

*Wash hands and surfaces often*

**To ensure that your hands and surfaces are clean, be sure to:**

- Wash your hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food and after using the bathroom, changing nappies and handling pets.
- Wash your cutting boards, dishes, utensils and counter tops with hot soapy water after preparing each food item and before you go on to the next food.
- Consider using paper towels to clean up kitchen surfaces. If you use cloth towels wash them often in the hot cycle of your washing machine.
- Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables under running tap water, including those with skins and rinds that are not eaten.
- Rub firm-skin fruits and vegetables under running tap water or scrub with a clean vegetable brush while rinsing with running tap water.
- With canned goods, remember to clean lids before opening.

#### Be Food Safe



### STEP 2: SEPARATE

*Separate raw meats from other foods*

**To prevent cross-contamination (when bacteria are spread from one food product to another), remember to:**

- Separate raw meat, poultry, seafood and eggs from other foods in your grocery shopping trolley, grocery bags and in your refrigerator.
- Use one cutting board for fresh produce and a separate one for raw meat, poultry and seafood.
- Never place cooked food on a plate that previously held raw meat, poultry, seafood or eggs.
- Don't reuse marinades used on raw foods unless you bring them to a boil first.

## Food Preparation

rather than taking a prescriptive approach. The H&S committee has put many One area that always generates discussion and questions is the handling of food.

### Be Food Safe



## STEP 3: COOK

*Cook to the right temperatures*

**!** To ensure that your foods are cooked safely, always:

- Use a food thermometer to measure the internal temperature of cooked foods. Check the internal temperature in several places to make sure that the meat, poultry, seafood, eggs or dishes containing eggs are cooked to safe minimum internal temperatures.
- Cook ground meat or ground poultry until it reaches a safe internal temperature. Colour is not a reliable indicator of doneness.
- Cook eggs until the yolk and white are firm. Only use recipes in which eggs are cooked or heated thoroughly.
- When cooking in a microwave oven, cover food, stir, and rotate for even cooking. If there is no turntable, rotate the dish by hand once or twice during cooking. Always allow standing time, which completes the cooking, before checking the internal temperature with a food thermometer. Food is done when it reaches the safe minimum internal temperature.
- Bring sauces, soups and gravy to a boil when reheating.

### Be Food Safe



## STEP 4: CHILL

*Refrigerate foods promptly*

**!** To ensure that your foods are properly chilled:

- Refrigerate or freeze meat, poultry, eggs, seafood and other perishables within 2 hours of cooking or purchasing. Refrigerate within 1 hour if the temperature outside is above 90°F.
- Never thaw food at room temperature, such as on the counter top. Food must be kept at a safe temperature during thawing. There are three safe ways to defrost food: in the refrigerator, in cold water, and in the microwave. Food thawed in cold water or in the microwave should be cooked immediately.
- Always marinate food in the refrigerator.
- Divide large amounts of leftovers into shallow containers for quicker cooling in the refrigerator.
- Use or discard refrigerated food on a regular basis.



# Members' Info

## Tsunami Appeal Update

**Most of you will recall the devastating Asian Tsunami that occurred on Boxing Day 2004. At the time we appealed for funds to sponsor the education of 500 orphans of the disaster victims, and attracted an incredible 2,968 sponsorships from within and without the Society.**

During the last ten years these sponsorships have raised over £610,000 that has been passed to the Indian National Council.

**The Tsunami Appeal has now formally ended.** The vast majority of these sponsorships were paid by standing order and many sponsors have kept their payments going. Obviously many of the students will have matured to working adulthood but as they crossed the threshold, their funding was in turn transferred to younger students. We do not have addresses of our sponsors so we

have not been able to remind them to cancel their standing orders. Instead, any money that has continued to be received has been credited to the Indian Student Sponsorship Scheme as many of the Tsunami Orphans have been absorbed into this aspect of Twinnage. If you are a sponsor, you can please either:

- Cancel your standing order, or
- Contact your CC Twinnage Officer or myself at PO Box 318, Whitstable CT5 9BS to continue with your payment to Indian Student Sponsorship and I will issue you with details of a new student.

To all Sponsors, old and new I wish to say a massive "Thank you" on behalf of the almost 3,000 orphans who have been educated through your generosity.

*David Wiles, National Sponsorships Officer, Twinnage*

## Heads-Up on Awareness Month 2016

Here's a heads-up on Awareness Month which will be taking place in September. This year we plan to provide Conferences with a choice of additional materials which you can order according to your need. These might include postcards, a banner and leaflets to give out before Mass.

The intention is to give Conferences an option to select what they think is most useful, which we hope will be kinder to the environment and save on costs!

We received lots of useful feedback from last Autumn's campaign. Of the 87 Conferences who fed back, 54 said they had attracted new or potential new members, with a total of 30 new members being recruited at the time and 68 people interested. The Happy Family posters were a little like Marmite - people either loved them or hated them! But feedback was generally very positive with 2 out of 3 people approving of the concept. Look out for more information in the Summer VC.

## Requests for Help

**SVP National Office frequently receives requests for help from members of the public. A review has taken place of the procedure for dealing with such requests and as a result the existing procedure has been revised and is now as follows:**

- Where a Conference President does not have an email address listed on the database, requests will be sent to the designated contact on the database for the Conference
- As advised by the Information Commissioners Office (ICO), all requests sent via e-mail will be password protected
- All requests will be anonymised by the way of a new coding system.
- Passwords relating to requests will be sent in a separate email
- Feedback forms will be e-mailed at a later date and can be returned to National Office by e-mail as well.

By processing the request in this way we will be saving approximately £2,000 per year. The new process will be monitored and a review of the process will be carried out in six months. Don't forget, a full set of policies and procedures can be found on the members' website at:

[svp.org.uk/Members-ResourcesandForms](http://svp.org.uk/Members-ResourcesandForms)

## Volunteers Needed!

A week of fresh air! Swimming, sport & sunshine!\*  
New friends! Invest in young people!

We are offering you an unforgettable opportunity to enjoy a week in the Essex countryside, where you will organise games, supervise children and ensure that the camp runs smoothly. Don't worry - you will be trained! Around 130 children aged between 8 and 13, many of whom rarely get a holiday, will spend a week immersed in a Vincentian camp, where everyone has a fantastic time! We are looking for volunteers to help us run the camp, and we especially need more LADIES! Please contact James Allen at [jamesboscoallen@mail.com](mailto:jamesboscoallen@mail.com) for full details. Or apply online at [www.svpboscocamp.org.uk/volunteer](http://www.svpboscocamp.org.uk/volunteer)



*\*Sunshine not guaranteed!*

## SVP Abeyance Procedure

From time to time difficult decisions need to be made and one of those decisions is to place a Conference into a state of abeyance.

### 'The Rule' (Internal Statutes of the Society) states the following:

**RULE 4.34** - If the number of active members or the lack of officers means that a Conference is unable to function effectively, the Conference will be put into a state of abeyance and the members shall be invited to become affiliated to or merge with a neighbouring Conference.

**RULE 4.35** - When a Conference goes into abeyance or ceases to be part of the Society, all funds of the Conference must be transferred to the District Council\*, together with the Minute and Account Books and any associated records. \*If the District Council does not have a Co-op bank account, then all funds must be transferred to the Central Council bank account.

### Responsibilities

The suspension or closure of a Conference or its officers can only be determined by the District or higher council.

### Central Councils

The CC President should countersign the 'Abeyance Notification form' before it is sent to National Office.

This form can be obtained on the members' website: [svp.org.uk/Members-ResourcesandForms](http://svp.org.uk/Members-ResourcesandForms) or directly from National Office. Please note that national Office staff cannot amend the database until this form is received.

### District Council

It is the responsibility of the District Council President to complete the 'Abeyance Notification form' and send to the Central Council President for countersigning. The District Council President is responsible for retrieving the minute and account books and any associated records, i.e. Member ID Cards. The DC President should also inform the Parish priest and the District Council Secretary where possible should inform, in writing, any beneficiaries under the care of the Conference of the current circumstances. The DC must ensure that a final financial return is sent to N.O. which accounts for any final income / expenditure and moves the Conference's last reported closing balance to £nil.

### National Office

National Office will update the relevant databases and revoke access to the 'member's area' of the website to members who have left the Society. National Office will transfer the funds from the Conference to the nominated District Council account as instructed on the 'Abeyance Notification form'. National Office will notify the CC President when process is complete.

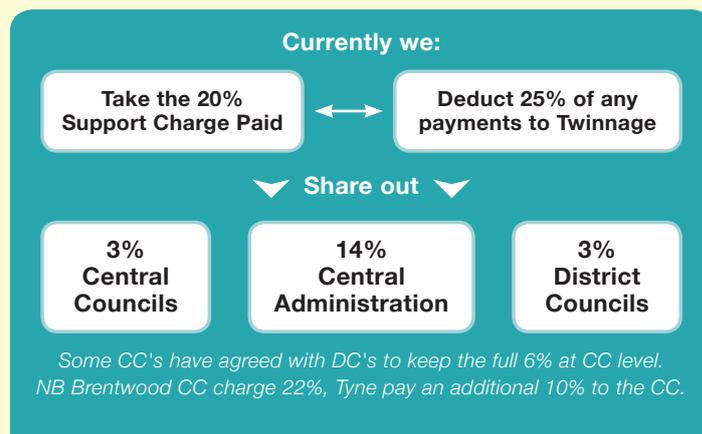
## Support Charge Consultation

Over the last few months members have been given the opportunity to participate in a consultation on the future of the support charge. Some members have participated in focus groups which have taken place across England and Wales and others have completed the on line survey. The reason for the review is to try and simplify the current system and thereby reduce the administrative burden to both treasurers and national office staff, to improve accuracy and return rates and to better meet our legal obligations.

### Current Support Charge Model

It has become evident that there is little understanding of how the support charge is currently utilised with many members and indeed treasurers not realising that only a percentage of the support charge is retained by national office to offset central running costs. Feedback from the consultation has indicated

a general appetite for change but that more work needs to be done on what this change might look like in reality. Further work will therefore be done on this over the next 6 months with a view to having a new model ready to implement in April 2017.





# CEO's Message

## Just Say Yes

They say an army marches on its stomach and it is certainly true that staff at National Office generally have a keen appetite. Some staff members bake cakes, while others buy biscuits and occasionally a box of chocolates will appear from the back of someone's cupboard.

**In January one of the members of staff in an attempt to resist the ever present temptation placed a sign on the "treat" table which read, "just say no". The sign is still there which is apt as dieting January has turned into Lenten February.**

On the whole I find it easier to say "no" to something in Lent than I do to say "Yes" to something extra. I am sure this means that the "yes" to something extra is probably more worthwhile. Maybe this is because there can always be an ulterior motive in saying no, such as it may be hard to give up biscuits but I may end up thinner too! Trying to do something extra however means finding more time in an already busy schedule and possibly giving something of ourselves in the process.

An intrinsic aspect of membership of the Society is to give of oneself. In one of the Society prayers we say "Help us to be generous with our time, our possessions and ourselves". This generosity of spirit takes many forms: saying "yes" to a difficult visit, saying "yes" to taking on a new role within the Society at Conference, District or Central Council level or saying "yes" to participate in a national event such as the "Founders Day" coffee



morning and thereby contributing to the vital work of the Young Vincentian programme.

So for Lent I may embrace the consumption of the odd biscuit in the office, but I shall also carry with me in my pocket a small written reminder to "just say yes" on the occasion when "no" would be easier. Who knows what graces may follow!

*Elizabeth Palmer, CEO*

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

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

**Jack Blackburn** - longstanding member of St Benet's Conference, Sunderland.

**William (Bill) Callaghan** - long serving member of St John the Evangelist's Conference, Bromley Cross.

**Phil Cusack** - long serving member and former President of St Gilbert's Conference, Eccles, Secretary of Manchester CC, and President of Salford DC

**Patrick Dowding** - long serving member of St Mary Mother of God Conference, Hornchurch.

**Wilf Feeney** - long serving member of St Thomas of Canterbury Conference, Bolton.

**Tony Huggett** - long serving member of St Catherine's Conference, Heathfield, East Sussex and former President of Eastbourne DC.

**Ann Murphy** - long serving member and former President of Virgo Fidelis Conference, Upper Norwood.

**Don O'Sullivan** - longstanding member and Treasurer of Our Lady Star of the Sea Conference, Ellesmere Port.

**Bernard Palmer** - longstanding member of Sacred Heart Conference, Aire Valley and President of Airedale and Skipton DC.

**Vivien Snow** - long serving member and former President of Our Lady and St Illtyd, Llantwit Major with St.Cadoc, Cowbridge Conference and former President of Mid Glamorgan DC.

**Lech Waszkiewicz** - dedicated member of Our Lady and the English Martyrs Conference, Urmston, Manchester.

**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 Diary Dates

### Board Meetings

**18th March** - Hinsley Hall (*Before National Council*)

**5th May** - London National Office

**24th June** - London National Office  
(*Day before National Council*)

**15th September** - London National Office

**14th - 15th October** - Hinsley Hall (Residential)

**25th November** - Hinsley Hall (*Before National Council*)

### National Council Meetings

**18th - 19th March** - Hinsley Hall (Residential)

**25th June** - London / Birmingham TBC

**25th - 26th November** - Hinsley Hall (Residential)

## Inviting content contributions for VC Summer Edition 2016

Next deadline for sending news and information for VC Summer Edition 2016 is 29th April 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.

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## 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.

