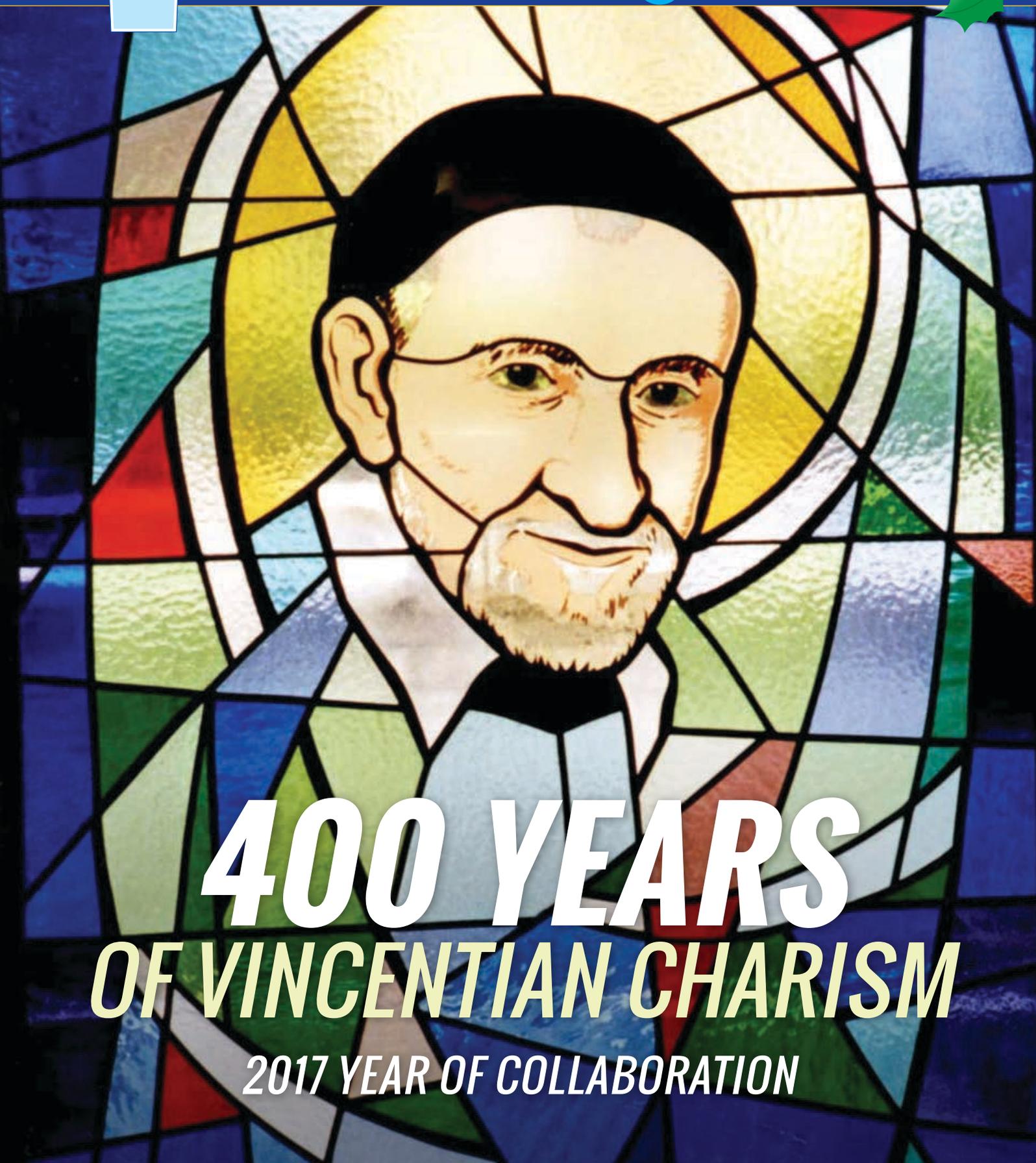


Vincentian Concern

St. Vincent de Paul Society (England and Wales)
Registered in England & Wales No: 3174679 • Charity Registration No: 1053992



ISSUE 52 Winter 2016 95p



400 YEARS
OF VINCENTIAN CHARISM
2017 YEAR OF COLLABORATION



An Eternal Reward



I am writing this on the feast of All Saints, the feast for all those saints who didn't change history, but who are in heaven having earned their eternal reward. They may be relatives, friends, or even former members of our Conference. Whatever, they have gained their eternal reward.

Beatification and canonisation come to very few, but on 18th March 2017 Pope Francis will beatify one of our own, Josef Mayr Nusser. In 1937 Josef became President of the Society in Bolzano, a German speaking city in Northern Italy, when he was just 26.

Soon afterwards war broke out and Josef wasted no time supporting anti-Nazi causes, but he was to pay a heavy price when in 1943 his country was invaded and he was conscripted into a German SS unit. However, he refused to swear an oath of allegiance to Hitler, on the grounds he could not reconcile Hitler's views with his Christian faith. As a result he was jailed and eventually sentenced to death for treason. He was made to march to the Dachau concentration camp, where he was to be shot by firing squad, but along the way he fell ill with dysentery and died Feb. 24, 1945, before reaching the camp. When his body was discovered on the train, he had both a Bible and a rosary with him. He left a wife and two year old son.

As a Society member Josef spent a large amount of his time visiting the poor and providing them with both material and spiritual support, strengthening his own faith. While the main reason for recruiting members is to better serve those in need, we mustn't forget that it is also about our own spiritual development. Therefore, recruiting new members is part of our responsibility for evangelisation, defined as proclaiming the Gospel in order to bring others to Christ and his Church.

Awareness Month 2016 is now a distant memory, but did you make good use of the materials sent to every Conference to gain new members? A few years ago an external survey revealed that 15% of new members joined as a result of a lectern appeal, a fact borne out by my own experience when speaking to Central Council Festival meetings. Yet at these meetings I find a pitiful small proportion of Conferences making such appeals. How much more could we do if most Conferences were to follow the format suggested in the recruitment pack?

The good news is that more and more Councils and Conferences are formulating a strategy for recruiting new members and membership, after years of slow decline, has now started to increase. In the last two years net membership has risen by 522 (6.8%). But this is not the whole story - while most Central Councils have made great progress others are still in decline. I have no intention of "naming and shaming" but it is clear from my knowledge that Councils that rely on Conferences to do their own thing are not successfully recruiting. On the other hand, those who have a programme of supporting and encouraging recruitment are the more successful. Southwark have a professional membership development officer, who has been able to start 14 Conferences. Liverpool, once one of our largest Central Councils, lost a huge number of Conferences and members, but is fighting back and increased membership by 23% over two years. Wrexham gained 21 new members (+28%) last year alone after years of decline.

You don't have to wait for Awareness month, make your plans now for 2017. Kieran Knights has suggested asking people to give some of their time to people in need as a Christmas present, supported by a poster and inserts for parish bulletins. Also, Lent is a great time, promoting the idea of doing something positive, rather than giving up something. Whatever, thanks for all your support and may I wish all our members, their families and those we seek to serve, blessings and joy for Christmas and success in 2017.

Adrian Abel, National President

Inside this Issue

President's Column	2
Spirituality	3
Conference Spotlight	4
Specialised Conference Activity	5
Community Support Projects	6-7
Twinnage	8-9
Young Vincentians	10-12
Behind the Scenes	13
Members' Info	14-17
Membership Development	18-19
Strategic Plan	20-21
Social Justice	22-23
Society News	24-27
Vincentian Family	28
Year of Collaboration	29
Health & Safety	30
Fundraising	31
SVP Structure	32
Patron's Page	33
CEO's Message	34
Board & National Council Meeting Dates	36

Keep in touch with us:

- SVPenglandandwales
- SVPEnglandWales



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



Me a Saint! Ah go on!

A life without a dream is a great sadness. We all have our dreams, and it is important never to lose them, it is having a dream, a goal that gives direction to our lives. Hopefully we also have plans on how to make our dream become a reality. The dreams of each of us may be different, but there is also one we all share! The dream to be a saint! I wonder when you last considered it, or made plans to realise it.

For a lot of people to be a saint is something very exotic and beyond their reach. To be another St. Mother Theresa, or a martyr like St. Ignatius of Antioch – when he was condemned to be thrown to the lions he declared he was God’s wheat – ground fine by the lions’ teeth – definitely not something for most of us! Yet to be a saint is our destiny, and our God-given calling. This is not just for the few – it is for all – we have been baptised and been adopted as children of God. Old or young, married or single, working or out of work, this should be our dream, and our concern should be planning to make it a reality.

There are many ways to become a saint, but as Vincentians we have a very special and particular way to sainthood. Fr. Tomaž Mavrič, newly elected Superior General of the Vincentian Congregation, puts it very simply – we Vincentians are called to be Mystics of Charity. To be a mystic means very simply, to be someone who directly and personally experiences the presence and activity of God and lives constantly with this reality. A mystic responds with a life of love and adoration of God. God is not far from us, but is present here and now. God is here in persons, in events, in circumstances, in poor people. God speaks to us in and through them. To be a Mystic of Charity, is to love and serve God, whom we meet especially in the poor, by our love and service of the poor. “Whatever you did for one of the least of these, who are my brothers, you did for me” (Mtt.25:40).

These words are so familiar to us, to be a Saint, a Mystic of Charity, is to live them, to love and serve God by loving and serving him in those who are suffering the effects of poverty.

Paul C Roche CM.

The Rule: Heed The Spirit! How The Daughters Of Charity Began

The Rule reminds us that “the key aspects of St Vincent’s spirituality” include, “To heed the inspiration of the Holy Spirit” (2.5). Many times, St Vincent referred to the guidance of Providence.

Today we would refer to inspiration, guidance and insights from the Holy Spirit. St Vincent would not hurry his projects. He preferred to wait until there were several signs that Providence favoured the work. He said, “Take care not to spoil God’s works by trying to hurry them too much. Take good time and know how to wait”. This message is as relevant now as it was in Vincent’s day, for our Special Works and projects!

Vincent had been saddened to find that some of the Ladies of Charity in Paris were sending their servants to the poor, instead of being personally committed to give continuous help themselves. One day in 1630, Vincent met a young village girl called Marguerite Naseau. He said she had received “a powerful inspiration from heaven” – from the Holy Spirit – to learn to read so she could teach young people – and later adults – how to read. She did this by going from village to village with two or three girls she had trained.

When she heard about a confraternity in Paris that served poor people who were sick, she went there and put that work first,

with Vincent’s encouragement.

Many other girls joined her. She was prepared to do any task, willingly and cheerfully, including those some of the Ladies of Charity had found too lowly or disgusting. The Holy Spirit had moved Marguerite, Vincent and other “village girls”.

Vincent wrote: What the good God wishes done is accomplished almost by itself, without our thinking of it” and he said, “God wanted her ...to be the first Daughter of Charity” (DC). Louise de Marillac helped to train these girls and introduced them to a method of mental prayer.

A year after Marguerite died of the plague, caught from someone she was helping, in 1631, the Daughters of Charity were flourishing, but Vincent waited twelve years, until there were hundreds of them, before he had them approved as a unique group whose convent was a house and whose cloisters were the streets.

The Society’s members and the Daughters of Charity have never ceased to help one another!



David Williams, May 2016



Conference Spotlight

A Nigerian Perspective

We've given this Conference Spotlight a Nigerian flavour. Pepsie Adiukwu, a TV football presenter from the capital city of Abuja recently visited the UK and accompanied Middlesbrough DC President Margaret Clarke on a trip to London.



The IDP Girls Football Team supported by St Christopher's Conference

Pepsie, a passionate SVP member from St Christopher's Conference, Abuja visited National Office and told Vincentian Concern about the regular games of soccer and a pop up chicken and chips café that her fellow members frequently organised.

Pepsie says: "Our Conference of St Stephen's Parish does a lot of work with children from the Internally Displaced Person's Camp (IDPC) whose families have been killed by Boko Haram. These children live in very basic conditions and are often suffering trauma and lack of care because their family members have very sadly been killed. One of the main activities of our Conference is to give these children the fun back in their lives. We take them to the theme park Magic Land, and to the cinema to watch shows. Many of the SVP members will develop personal relationships with the children using their local dialect and language, and translate for me and others who cannot speak the dialect.

We also have a girls' soccer team which we run for the children from the camp. It is a way for them to pass time, be creative and stops them falling into trouble. Teams are coached by a male and a female coach. Parishioners donate equipment and jersey tops for the girls. The children range from 7 to 15 years old, but most of them don't know their real age. Some of them are not very well educated and the soccer gives them a good start from a young age and trains them in skills. It's fun for them and it's relaxing. Once, the coach was ill, we the SVP took her to hospital so she could be given treatment. Through the SVP the children get additional help – with food items, clothing and funding for education for those in school.

In Abuja we also visit people who are lonely and isolated and help with practical assistance. However, loneliness is less of a problem than in the UK because people live with or close to extended family. It is not a huge issue. The poverty tends to be in terms of hunger and needing education.

My Conference meets after Mass on a Saturday morning. Afterwards we sit in a circle and the local people come to our meetings. We call them one by one, and we ask them what they need and they tell us. Sometimes they are strong and they can work, but they lack employment. We help them set up a small business for themselves – we say "ok go and cost it, then tell us what you need." Then we investigate and see its ok, and if so we may fund it. If we don't have enough money from donations then we will ask the Parish Priest. We have financed many small businesses including food vending at building sites, farming, newspaper vending, and we have also sponsored a young lady to train as a hairdresser and assisted a young man in setting up a mechanic's workshop. Generally we give around 20,000 Naira (£10) per business to help us spread our help as widely as possible.

The parishioners are very generous. One young man was part of the Internally Displaced Persons' Camp and he had a broken hip and his operation was going to be very expensive. We went to the church and made an appeal and people donated money which was used to pay for his operation. After the appeal and the operation, we took the young man to the church and showed the parishioners what they had helped achieve.

We do an Easter and Christmas drive as well. We collect bags of rice and the poor come to our meetings and collect them. At Easter we were expecting some people to come from the IDPC and some from their homes, but we had more than 700 people! That shows the extent of the need.

We hold a Christmas party for the children each year. We share food with the children and the children dance and we dance with them. We also have a project introduced by one of our members – a pop up café every Sunday. A parishioner donated tables and chairs and canopies and after Mass we share the cooking and set up and sell chicken, chips, donuts, rice and drinks and the SVP use the money made to help more people. There's a positive spirit and this is reflected by the people we help."

Send in your contribution to 'Conference Spotlight' to anitab@svp.org.uk

SVP Prison Visiting



SVP Conference members today visit and befriend people who are lonely and isolated, providing company, practical support, and friendship. However, one Conference in Durham takes befriending a step further, visiting and supporting people in prison.

St Dismas Conference started when the Prisoner Advice and Care Trust (PACT), made up partly of members of the SVP, decided to close and move to London in the 1980s. The SVP realised the need to continue the work and stepped in to carry the mantle of prisoner support in the diocese.

Today members of St Dismas Conference support prisoners in the Young Offenders Institute and Durham Prison.

Pat Morton is a member of St Dismas and explains that the work done is very varied. “We support the chaplain at the prisons, providing treats for prisoners like Easter Eggs, chocolate biscuits at Christmas, and fulfilling unexpected requests. For instance, a prisoner recently broke his glasses and could not afford a replacement pair. We provided a small grant so that he could purchase new glasses, recognising the importance of this to the prisoner.” Very often SVP members seek to visit the families of the prisoner so they need to go through the local authority in order to be put in touch with that person’s family. They cannot do it through the prison which makes things a longer and more difficult process. There can be a lot of stigma for families with a father or mother behind bars. These families need support and compassion. Pat says that some members also support prisoners when they leave prison, helping them make the transition back into family and back into society. “That work is vital” she says.

Asked why the SVP has a special role to prisoners, Pat responds: “SVP members do more than social work. They visit for the development of the person, their spiritual development.

“ Pat says visiting and supporting prisoners “makes you understand humanity more. It makes you more tolerant of people, it changes you as a person. It certainly changed me”. ”

Anyone can break the law and end up in prison and we are making them feel that they are still part of humanity, still part of the wider world.”

The effects of the visits, says Pat, is that the prisoners feel better, calmer and this also helps the staff. Talking more about the spiritual care that the SVP gives prisoners Pat explains that members pray with them, give them prayer resources, work together with the Chaplaincy group to put across the Christian message.

“The Spiritual side is vital”, says Pat. “I think they need spiritual input and some of them thirst for it. They have had Baptisms sometimes, and we provide baptismal certificates for them”. Likewise, the SVP provide certificates if the prisoners complete religious or other courses. “This is so important in young offenders’ institutes where most of them have never been praised or gained a qualification.”

The work of being a being a prison visitor takes listening and patience. Pat says: “Sometimes you can sit next to a prisoner for years and they wouldn’t say a thing. At other times you sit by someone and it all pours out. You’re a listener – you don’t judge. You have to accept them as they are. You don’t know what they have done, you accept them for who they are now, not by the crime they have committed.”



Community Support Projects

How far we have come!

Since the last Vincentian Concern, CSPs have been focusing on the key themes identified as necessary to progress towards that sustainable country-wide Network of Charity to which we aspire.

We've been busy...

Establishing an effective management structure

Following a national plan for growth in Community Shops

Building up a regional structure which engages with the membership

Improving coordination with all Projects whatever their relationship to the financial framework

Embedding an acceptance that investment and prudent management of financial resources are a necessary precursor to long-term success

Key developments are:

- **In Leeds:** Re-location of the SVP St Vincent's Support Centre into a new MUCH BIGGER premises with its community learning projects and shop and café supporting a huge local community.
- **In Newcastle:** Beginning to develop the Blackfriars Centre in line with our vision for a Support Centre.
- **In Brighton:** Helping Brighton members to fulfil their vision of having a Support Centre for the elderly.
- **In Bradford (CHAS):** We have also just received a big boost to our funding by winning a bid for Advice and Support services in South Bradford. This will enable the Society to develop an enhanced model for advice and support, with more outreach work. It will also give us a more secure platform from which to explore our vision of linking these services more closely with the work of our members throughout the country.
- **In Ellesmere Port:** This 27 year old project comprising a Furniture Store and two shops, run by local members will be assimilated into the main CSP framework from 1st November.

All of the developments you have just read about show us building on the strength of our CSPs across the country, reaching more areas and even more people who need our help. Some of the changes we have had to make relate to financial structures, and management and administration, others relate directly to the running of projects such as our support centres. Please keep the CSPs in your prayers during these exciting times.

Progress so far includes...

Shops Openings as follows:

- Bradford (May) - a large double fronted shop based in Sunbridge Road in the heart of Bradford.
- Crawley (June) - a large unit in Broadfield, Crawley, West Sussex.
- Newport, South Wales (September).
- Bury, Greater Manchester (November).

Units proposed to be open by the end of the financial year:

- Llandudno • Brighouse

Closures

After consultation with local members, we have also had to take the hard decision to close some shops that have not been able to sustain themselves or were not serving the needs of the local community in the way that we had intended. These were:

- Middlesbrough, Rothbury Road and Rhyl, North Wales (31st October 2015);
- Plymouth, St Budeaux (August 2016)
- Rochdale, Greater Manchester (31st October 2016)
- Hanley, Birmingham (Open by volunteers until 30th January 2017)

Other Developments

We've made changes to the way we account for CSPs, with an intention to support these projects more closely and continue to work with our local members. The intention is to continue developing CSPs services in line with the SVP aspiration to help people in need. We are working with many of our members on projects to do just this.

Case Study

Every day our shops, furniture stores and Advice and Support Centres reach hundreds of people in need. They provide not only practical support, but also have an impact in people's emotional lives.

One beneficiary who regularly visits the SVP Community Shop in Blakelaw recently wrote to us to say that after his mother passed away he "felt down in the dumps" but "was amazed by the cheerfulness and welcoming attitude of the friendly staff who always go out of their way to help the customers and cheer them up when they are feeling down".

Letters like this give an insight into the contribution CSPs make to the wellbeing of so many people.

Community Support Projects

CSP receives homeless packs from enthusiastic group of Mini Vinnies



Mini Vinnies putting together the Vinnie Packs for CHAS



The contents of the packs made for CHAS by the Mini Vinnies

Chas @ St Vincent's Bradford had a wonderful donation of approximately 60 Homeless Packs kindly donated by Minnie Vinnies year 6 "Our Lady at St Brendan's" Bradford. The enthusiastic children assisted by Teacher Mrs Gillian Evans have been collecting the donations since September 2015 and delighted that they can help people in need. The packs were made up by the children, and the material bags to hold the contents were made by the staff. Arrangements have been made for the Mini Vinnies to visit the depot at Rees Way Bradford in the near future and learn about the services that St Vincent's offer to the community. The packs are going to be sent out by CHAS to local SVP Conferences to distribute amongst the people they help.

Opening of new CSP shop in Bury, Manchester

Beverley Whittaker writes: "We are pleased to announce the opening of a new Community Shop in Bury town centre. Bury is a really busy and vibrant shopping centre in Greater Manchester, with the award winning Bury Market just round the corner from the shop. This means that as well as the usual busy passing trade, we get a couple of extra thousand visitors on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays.

The shop is situated 10 metres away from the tram and bus station so we should be fighting shoppers off, well let's hope so anyway. We also have our own resident homeless person located outside of the shop, so there will be lots of tea and help given to him where we can.

The shop was opened on time and within budget, with Mike Clark project managing the whole activity and with new shop manager Jennifer Anderson in situ we are raring to go! We are still in the process of recruiting an assistant shop manager and



The front window at Bury SVP Community Shop

volunteers. So if you are in the vicinity and want to drop in, especially on a market day you can get your very own "Bury black pudding", but not from the shop I hasten to add, although that may be a side line to think about for the future!"



Saving South Sudan from the grip of civil conflict

On a warm evening in Geneva this summer, after a full day of meetings I sat and listened to Betram's answers to my questions regarding where he comes from, his family and how he came to be involved with the work he does now with the SVP in South Sudan.

Without appearing to be prying I was trying to gain some appreciation of how a young man like him became able to provide so much help to his fellow men. Being surrounded by a degree of opulence which can be found in any major city in the western world, made his answers almost surreal.

Dr Betram Kuol was born to parents of modest means but high moral standards and grew up in a way which cannot be comprehended by most people in Europe where, no matter how short of money we may be, we take most of the necessities in life for granted. He was born into the Dinka tribe in a remote village near Bor, South Sudan. Betram was 7 years old before he started school. Despite a deprived childhood his hard work and sheer determination resulted in him achieving a PhD in Agriculture. Instead of using this to create his own personal wealth he uses his skills to benefit the poor.

Earlier this year Betram, who is the SVP projects coordinator for South Sudan, had to leave his home because the area, in the suburbs of the capital Juba, became too dangerous. After having locked himself in his house for 48 hours (sleeping under his bed), he walked in streets littered with corpses and deserted by civilians, down to the cathedral to seek refuge.

He is currently living in a guest room at the university. For some time, he couldn't go back home to retrieve his belongings,

because it is too risky, especially at night. The SVP Vocational Training and Community Development Centre for which he's responsible closed for ten days after the fighting in July. Since then, all programs have resumed normally.



Mother with her child at the IDP camp in Juba



Children at the IDP camp in Juba

The birth of a new nation has been difficult. Not long after gaining independence and emerging from decades of civil war, South Sudan was again plunged back into conflict in December 2013 when President Salva Kiir sacked his then-deputy Riek Machar and accused him of plotting a coup. The personal rivalry sparked fighting between forces loyal to the president and rebels allied with Machar. It also deepened a rift between two of South Sudan's largest ethnic groups -- Kiir's dominant Dinka and Machar's Nuer tribe. The result of this personal rivalry, greed and corruption on the population is devastating. According to Amnesty International 2.4 million people have been displaced, 2.8 million are desperately short of food and 6.2 million are in urgent need of assistance.

What chance of peace?

Any chance of peace soon rests with the "Transitional Government of National Unity". In brief, it needs all the countries leaders to work together and (within the next 3 years) develop a constitution which will result in the election of a democratic government.

Can this happen?

The solution is mainly in the hands of 2 men: President Kiir is a Dinka and an Army General; like many in Africa he sees conflict and fighting as a way of life. Kiir headed the army wing (SPLA) of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), when Dr John Garang was killed in a helicopter crash. On the other hand, Vice President Machar is an intellectual and is of the Nuer tribe. He trained as an engineer at Khartoum University, and obtained a PhD in Philosophy and strategic planning from the University of Bradford in 1984.



The SVP is responding in 2 ways to address both short term and long term needs:

Short term: Internally Displaced People's (IDP) Camps

There were previously 3 camps for internally displaced people supported by the SVP but the only one where the SVP is still operating is now Mahat, which was home to 9,400 people in March 2016. It occupies land that was previously an Islamic school and a training centre for teachers. The camp is not an SVP project but the SVP provides donations and assistance through the Conferences. The Camp receives some support from the World Food Bank, based on a 2013 assessment when only 3,430 people were registered. The other NGOs that previously provided assistance have now left.

There are 2 basic needs, both are equally important:

- To respond to the needs of refugees and keep people alive – short term.
- To enable people to look after themselves by providing skills and a new start in life.

Long term: Major support programmes which have been proved successful in the area around Khartoum are now being replicated in Juba. These include vocational training at the Lologo Centre which is also the home to a medical clinic, elementary education and baby feeding.

Out of a total of 62 vocational training initiatives implemented since the signing of the Peace agreement in 2005, only five are still operational and viable to date. According to Mr. Salah Khaled, UNESCO representative to South Sudan, two organizations are clearly standing out of the crowd: Don Bosco in Gumbo, a village just outside Juba, and SVP in Lologo.



Internally Displaced Persons Camps in Juba

Our members do what they can to help themselves so that they will become less reliant on help from us. Income generating initiatives include: Agricultural Production Scheme, Poultry Production, Brick Manufacturing, Truck Rental, Furniture and Clothing manufacture and Bakery Products.

Whether the help given by our brothers and sisters in South Sudan is short term emergency help or long term "teaching a man to fish" they can't do it without our help.

We urge members to encourage their friends and parishioners to support the Sudan Appeal as generously as possible. In Juba market people can buy ½ a tomato for ½p... because they can't afford a whole one!

Ian's full report on the SVP in South Sudan can be downloaded from: www.twinnage.org.uk/News/Report-on-SVP-in-South-Sudan-2016.pdf

Ian Mawdsley

Could your Conference run an appeal to support the work of the SVP in Sudan in your parish?



To support the wonderful work of our members in Sudan and South Sudan who are giving life and hope to those in such desperate need we aim to raise £250,000 each year and much of this comes from parish collections.

We have supplies of leaflets to hand out available from the

Twinnage Office twinnage@talk21.com or call 01892 652017. You can download a poster and draft texts for a pulpit appeal for your parish newsletter from the resources page of our website: www.twinnage.org.uk

Get the answers to your questions and more...

What is Twinnage?

Which countries are we twinned with?

Country Reports

Sponsor a student in India

Small projects for your Conference

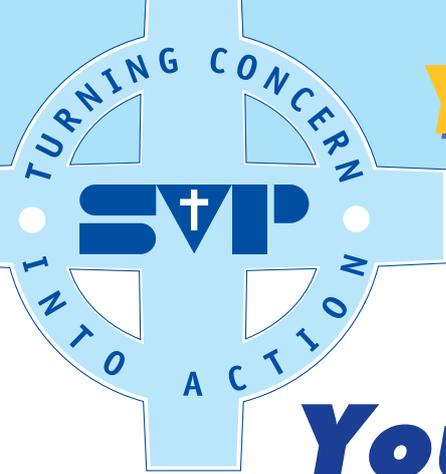
Leaflets & Promotional Materials

Help with launching a Sudan Appeal

Latest News

FAQ's

Find out at www.twinnage.org.uk



Young Vincentians

The Brand New Youth SVP Starter Kit!

Blessed Frédéric Ozanam wrote in 1853, "Our principal object was not to come to the assistance of the poor... that was only a means which we employed. Our object was to keep ourselves firm in the Catholic faith, and to spread that Faith amongst others through charity... what were we to do to be true Catholics, if not that which pleased God most? Let us help our neighbour as Jesus Christ did, and let us put our faith under the protection of charity. [...we must seek] Jesus Christ suffering in the poor".



So what is the Young Vincentians department doing to move the hearts of our Mini Vinnies, Youth SVP, B-Attitude and SVP 1833 groups into living out Blessed Frédéric's wishes for the Society?

Over the last year and a half, we have been developing resources for the appropriate age range that matches our wonderful Mini Vinnies spiritual resources in quality and in truth. We have, for the time being, put resource development for SVP 1833 on hold, and B-Attitude will have its own page in the next edition of Vincentian Concern. But we are so excited and delighted to introduce the brand new Starter Kit for Youth SVP, which includes print-only liturgical resources according to Liturgical Years A, B and C, and are in the process of obtaining the Nihil Obstat/Imprimatur. We are seeing more and more Chaplains approach us about starting up an SVP group as more and more of our Mini Vinnies move up into secondary education, and so we needed to have a solid package to offer these Chaplains (which can be equally offered to Parish Priests and Catechetical Coordinators as a pre-Confirmation programme).

Lo and behold! Thanks to the generosity of YOUR Conferences, District Councils and Central Councils who have supported us in prayer, by giving financially (examples include the Coffee Mornings) and by raising awareness of Youth SVP at local level, we now have this spiritually rich resource to help our Youth SVP members continue to develop and live their Vincentian lifestyles, rooted in Christ, for the service of the poor.

Get in touch with your local YVDO if your parish or local secondary school would like to kickstart their Youth SVP programme - especially if they are taking on the 'Faith in Action' CYMFed Award Scheme!



A YOUTH SVP STARTER KIT INCLUDES:

- 30 badges • 30 YSVP Members' Handbooks
- 3 Leader's Books • Starter Manual
- Year A & C Liturgical Resources (Year B to follow)
- Sample of YSVP Certificate

POSTERS

- 3 YSVP Posters • 3 B-Attitude Posters
- 1 YVDO Recruitment Poster • 1 B-Attitude FAQ
- 1 Banner Poster

FORMS

- Letter of Welcome • Service Level Agreement
- Annual Secretarial Return • Re-Order Form
- Parental Consent Template
- Vincentian Coordinator Role Description
- Leadership Roles for YV Groups

(Certificates for YSVP are issued at the end of April after the NO has received the Annual Secretarial Form!)

- 3 Young Vincentian Info Booklets
- Latest edition of Vincentian Concern

YSVP Starter kits come as part of the set-up process through YVDOs, and are priced at £130 + P&P contains member resources for thirty 11-14 year old members.



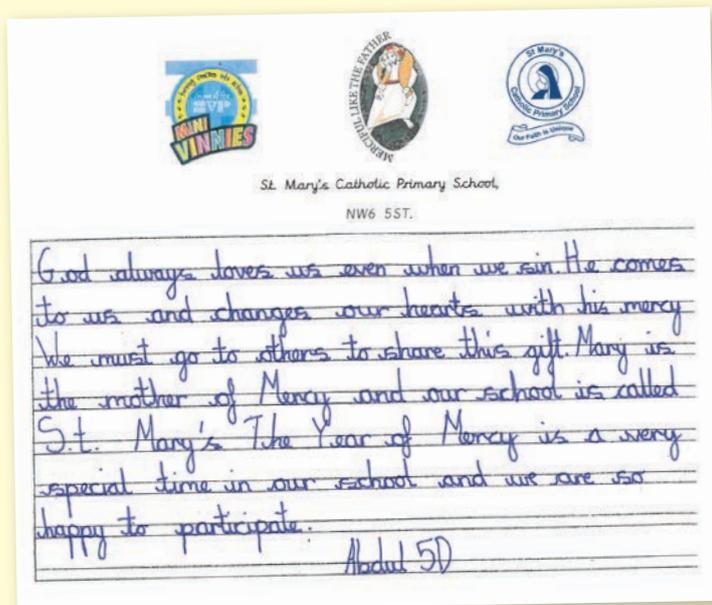
Living the Year of Mercy to the fullest!

At St Mary's Catholic Primary School (Kilburn), we are very impressed with how our children are engaging with the Year of Mercy. The Mini Vinnies are doing a fantastic job at leading us in different ways to experience the Year of Mercy at a deeper level.

One of these ways is our use of Mercy Tokens to recognise Works of Mercy being carried out in our school community. This is having a powerful impact on the wider community, as we share with our families the Mercy we receive from the Father and from each other. We pray to our Patroness, St Mary, to help us to multiply the graces of this special year.

Miss Philbin, Mini Vinnies Co-ordinator, St. Mary's Catholic Primary School, Kilburn.

The SVP are delighted to hear how the Mini Vinnies apostolate has contributed in some small way to the enlivening of the faith of the pupils at St Mary's in Kilburn. What impressed us most was how Miss Philbin took our Mercy Tokens initiative and really brought it to life for the whole school. She says "We have decided that we will have 'Mercy boxes' (with Year of Mercy logo) in each classroom and in a shared prayer area. Templates will be provided for the children to 'post' the nominations, detailing the acts of mercy they encountered among their peers."



We especially love it when even Diocesan Inspectors mention the contribution that Mini Vinnies makes to the Catholic ethos of the school, and how pupils are responding to God's Mercy in their daily lives!

“ It was a delight to read of the ways in which you have transformed the educational experience for our pupils in your school, particularly in their Catholic life, in such a challenging and exciting way. I was impressed by the ways in which your pupils are given opportunities to prepare the rich and vibrant prayer life of the school and the extensive work you do with the children on issues of social justice, especially with the Mini Vinnies. You are creating our future Catholic leaders! The inspectors were inspired by the rapid improvement in the development of the pupils' religious literacy and their ability to articulate their faith. What also emerges as a real strength is your partnerships with parents and with the parish and the way in which you engage with them to ensure pupils receive the best quality Catholic education you can offer. ”

Extract from the Chief Inspector's Section 48 report on the school.



Young Vincentians

Helping locally as well as abroad!



The Mini Vinnies group at St Augustine's RC Primary School in Darlington have recently taken part in a scheme to sponsor the education of children of disadvantaged families in India. £150 was raised from a raffle, enough to send 10 children to school for a year.

The Indian children are sponsored for one year under the SVP Vidya Jyothi Scheme for school children. The school has received a certificate for each child detailing their names and

their school year, as well as the diocese and State in which they live. Members of the adult SVP Conference were invited to a special assembly, during which the certificates were presented to the school. It is expected that the school will continue to support this wonderful initiative in years to come. This assembly was organised and led by the children. Parents of the Mini Vinnies were also welcomed to the assembly, during which new members of the group were officially enrolled in their Vincentian family.

As well as sponsoring disadvantaged children to attend school, The Mini Vinnie's group regularly collect donations of food for a local food bank and hope to be able to learn more about the way the food bank operates. They have proved to be excellent fundraisers in supporting the adult Conference in their work locally. Some of the children enjoyed the experience of accompanying adult SVP members on the visits to take Holy Communion to the sick. They also produce prayer cards which are distributed at Christmas and Easter.

Brian Humphrey, Secretary, Darlington St Augustine's Conference

Socktober with the SVP Mini Vinnies!

The new Mini Vinnies group at St Joan of Arc, Highbury initiated 'Socktober' at their school and parish. The young people organised the collection of socks to give to people in need.

Conference President Helen O'Shea went to collect what she thought would be a few bags of socks and ended up filling her little Fiat car. Helen says: "We now have enough socks to distribute through Conferences in our District and to deliver bag loads to the Passage homeless project."

WELL DONE MINI VINNIES!



Mini Vinnies at St Joan of Arc, Highbury

Behind the Scenes at National Office

In this edition of Vincentian Concern, we take a look at the people who staff the Young Vincentian's Department.



CLAZ GOMEZ

Claz is National Young Vincentian Coordinator, responsible for overseeing the four apostolates, Mini Vinnies, Youth SVP,

B-Attitude and SVP 1833. Passionate about both her faith, and about young people, Claz's commitment to youth evangelisation provides her with direction and a sense of mission in her work.

Claz was raised a Catholic, but did not believe in a personal God until she embarked on a pilgrimage at the age of 26. It was while walking the El Camino across Spain that she says she "experienced God in a very powerful mystical moment" and knew that she would devote her life to God, responding to His call to youth evangelisation.

Claz moved her career from global media intelligence in the City of London, to become a parish based youth worker, helping out on Youth 2000. She discerned a vocation to the enclosed Discalced Carmelite Order and found herself at the SVP soon after that. Claz enjoys her work at the SVP serving God and neighbour, encouraging young people to embrace their Vincentian Vocation and help others in need. As the Coordinator of the Young Vincentians she works with Central Council and District Council Presidents to set up and support the apostolates, ensuring that young people have the resources they need to "be the best Vincentians they can be."

Outside of work Claz worships at Ealing Abbey and is a regular member of Ealing Abbey's SVP Conference. She says: "I felt that I just had to join after reading David Williams' Mind and Heart of a Vincentian. If I just wanted to do volunteering work because it was a good thing to do, then I could have joined any organisation. But once I was enlightened as to the roots and spirituality of the SVP, I could not resist becoming a member!"

Claz is also studying for a Masters equivalent in Spiritual Theology, which is also known as the 'Science of holiness' and looks at the intricacies of interior life, prayer and God's operation through both.



LUCIA ZAMBOJOVA

Lucia is the SVP's National Young Vincentian Administrative Assistant. Her work involves supporting Claz and answering

phone calls and emails, processing payments, working with data, overseeing resources stock, which keeps her very busy.

Lucia says: "Every day bring some new challenges and tasks so one has to be really flexible. It can be quite demanding at times, but God has always been good. I am proud to be part of this wonderful Young Vincentian part of the SVP, especially when I hear such great things about what our young members are doing." She says to young people "you are being truly faithful to the first-spirit of the SVP, in the words of Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, "to keep yourselves firm in the Catholic Faith and to spread the faith among others through charity."

Lucia was born in Trnava, Slovakia where she spent her childhood and attended school. She graduated with two Masters qualifications, in Primary School Education and English Language and Literature. While in Slovakia Lucia led the children's Church Choir for ten years. In 2008 she moved to England and spent 4 years in Corby in Northants.

After four years supervising employees in a factory, Lucia moved to East Mosely in Surrey to spend a year in a Retreat House. Her journey led her from there to a religious life and she tried her vocation with a Missionary order and spent four months working in Zimbabwe. However, she realised the Missionary life was not right for her and after 3 years with the Order she left. She prayed to God for a good job within a Catholic environment and found her position with the SVP.

Outside of the SVP Lucia enjoys reading, walking in the woods, watching or doing sports including football, basketball and martial arts. She also volunteers as a Secretary for the Slovak Catholic Mission in London, interpreting and translating for them. She says: "My God and my faith are the two most important things for me and I would not negotiate on them no matter what."



Members' Info

A new International President for the SVP!

Brazilian Renato Lima de Oliveira has become the XVI International President of the SVP. Renato succeeds Dr Michael Thio who has led the SVP since 2010.

During his inauguration speech, Renato said: "All those present here, have a dream, or many dreams for the SSVP. Let's dream together! Let us have faith that our dreams come true. Enough to believe and to want. There is still much to do, so within the General Council and in our Superior Councils.

The challenges are enormous. Service to the poor, sustained by faith, hope and charity, which promotes the encounter with the "incarnate Christ" in the figure of the poor as Ozanam thought, depends on us! Let us continue together on the path of services and initiatives that can provide more velocity and efficiency to our Councils and Conferences!"

Renato joined the SSVP in 1986 (Conference Santo Tomás de Aquino, Campinas, São Paulo, Brazil). He was the Territorial Vice-President of zone America 3 (comprising the countries



Renato Lima

of South America) from 2013. He also represented the CGI within the Commission of Collaboration of the Vincentian Family from 2013. A journalist by profession, Renato holds a Masters in Political Science, and is also a government officer in the service of the National Telecommunications Agency. Apart from these activities, he has written books, including the "Vincentian Chronicles".

Vincentain Camps for Children!

The work of the SVP is often associated with befriending older people but members' support for young people was never more apparent than in the outpouring of financial and other support for our children's camps this summer.

Around 2000 people who would not otherwise have a holiday benefitted from family holidays and children's camps organised by the Society and in many cases paid for by Conferences. This included 90 young people following an email appeal to members for donations, in the Spring. Children were not the only beneficiaries as mothers and fathers struggling to cope with the strains of daily life enjoyed a brief respite from the responsibilities of parenting.

In addition to financial support, a number of Conferences actually visited their local camp to enjoy the children playing sports, baking cakes, doing arts and crafts and generally just having the time of their life.

From the children and their parents, a huge thank you.



Blackfriars Roof

The final costs for roof repairs at the SVP Centre in Newcastle have now been formally assessed at £272,000. Of this Tyne Central Council has been able to raise £139k. Donations to date from other Central Councils amount to just over £21k. Particular thanks to the following Conferences for their generosity:

- **St Benedict - Sketty** using the legacy of John Giovanni Macari (£5000).
- **Tyne Central Council** using Charles Nash legacy (£7862) (ring fenced).
- **Our Lady of Grace & St Teresa of Avila - Chingford** using the Elizabeth Davie legacy (£10000).
- **St Edmund of Canterbury - Beckenham** using the Catherine Conroy legacy (£500).
- **St Bede - Carlisle** using the Cecilia McCormack legacy (£2000).

This still leaves a shortfall of over £100k. The Blackfriars Centre does great Vincentian work within the Community. 21 Homeless people live in the Centre in Supported Accommodation and a range of community activities are run from the Centre, involving 900 people a week. The Centre is a real hub for the community.

If your Conference has a legacy or surplus funds please consider making a donation to the Blackfriars Roof fund as a matter of urgency and help the work of your Vincentian brothers and sisters in Tyne Central Council.



DBS Compliance

As all members should be aware, all visiting members are expected to have a satisfactory DBS or CRB registered with the Catholic Safeguarding Advisory Service (CSAS). As the Society is registered with CSAS a finding by any other organization such as the NHS that a DBS disclosure is satisfactory for their purposes cannot be relied upon for full Society membership. Unfortunately, only a CSAS registered DBS is acceptable

Keeping in mind the Society's legal obligation to ensure compliance with DBS requirements, the Trustees have decided that the few remaining members without a satisfactory CSAS registered DBS will shortly receive a letter stating that effective on receipt of the correspondence, they may no longer visit beneficiaries. Those members who have not applied for a DBS by 31st March 2017 will have their full membership revoked.

Satisfactory DBSs are required to keep both members and beneficiaries safe. And members should therefore bear in mind that not everything on a police record raises a safeguarding concern which would automatically disqualify them from visiting.

For example, a conviction for fly tipping or some other minor or historical conviction would not necessarily raise a safeguarding concern which would prevent them from becoming full members. Even those with a "blemished" DBS may be eligible to support the Society's work as auxiliary members. It is a fundamental principle of the Society that decisions regarding a person's suitability to work with vulnerable groups are made at Safeguarding Office level and not at the local level. Such applications are decided in a sensitive, case by case basis.

Members who do not engage in a regulated activity do not require a DBS or CRB.

The Society realizes that the decision to suspend may cause hardship in the short run for both members and beneficiaries. However, our obligation to observe the law is paramount and in the long term will benefit everyone.

Central Council Safeguarding Officers as well as the Society's National Safeguarding Officer who can be reached at 020 7703 3030 or by email at catherinek@svp.org.uk, will offer guidance and assistance as required.



Members' Info

Finance Department On the Move!



Rob White



Clare Dalton

Changes are underway at National Office. The finance department is moving to the SVP offices in Bradford. This is an exciting departure as it is the first step in co-locating National Office in a site outside of London.

As part of the move there will also be some restructuring in order to provide the best service possible, to members and projects. As of the 1st December Robert White will be taking over as Head of Finance and will be recruiting a new finance team.

When the Bradford team is fully staffed there will be 7 full and part time posts based there. Recruitment for these new posts is underway.

As of the 1st December Clare Dalton will be taking on a new role of Head of Conference Accounts. In this role she will be working from home 3 days a week and office based in London only 2 days a week. From January onwards she will be heavily involved in training treasurers across England and Wales and more information will follow on this exciting initiative. At the end of March we expect Clare to take maternity leave.

The Society is lucky to have both Clare and Rob in the finance function. Clare has done the most fantastic job as Head of Finance and she will continue to provide excellent support to the Society in her new role. Rob is relishing his new position and after his success in getting the CSP accounts in order he is ready for his next challenge!

Treasurers will be contacted directly with instructions as to what this means for Conference returns in 2017. In the meantime Treasurers should continue to send their returns to London, where John Mesher will be continuing to process the returns until December.

What is an Auxiliary Member?

It would appear that there some members are still confused about the definition of an Auxiliary Member.

The SVP Guidance Manual states that an Auxiliary member is: "Anyone, whether in a Conference, Special Work or CSP, who has committed to support the Society regularly and actively by completing the enrolment process and whose name appears on the Society Database, **but who does not visit.**"

As Auxiliaries do not visit, they do not need a DBS. This definition may also apply to someone who is brought in to perform an administrative task for the Conference, such as a Treasurer, but who does not visit." For more information about the different types of SVP membership, you can access the Guidance Manual which is available on the members' area of svp.org.uk.



Changes to the Support Charge

We have been reviewing the Support Charge and some of you may have taken part in the consultations back in January / February 2016. The changes have now been approved by the Trustees after consultation with the National Council.

We wanted to increase the transparency of where the funds were going. From discussions it became clear that a significant proportion of members - including some Board members - were not aware how the 20% was actually being shared around the Society.

The updated finance return will show clearly where Support Charges end up and means that each Conference will know exactly how much they have contributed to the costs of running the Society, their CC/DC and Twinnage.

Going forwards, the 20% Support Charge will be replaced with:

- **A 10% Support Charge to be paid on titheable income that will go in full towards the cost of supporting Conferences centrally.** This includes the costs of providing advice and support to Conferences on recruitment, H&S, safeguarding and more. It also includes the costs of processing finance and secretarial returns, processing fundraising for Conferences (CAF cheques, Gift Aid, Cash4Coins, etc.) and producing the Vincentian Concern.
- **We are replacing the one size fits all approach of raising funds for CCs and DCs.** We have asked each Central Council to review their expenditure needs and nominate either a % of titheable income or a fixed amount to be charged to Conferences in their areas. This will still be collected nationally and then paid out to CCs and DCs.
- **We will be introducing a fixed amount for each Conference of £12.50 per quarter (£50 per annum).**

This does not cover the full costs of managing Conference administration centrally but it is an amount that we felt that all Conferences should be able to afford. Something that came out of the consultations was agreement that all Conferences should contribute something to the costs of running the Society. We have a small minority of Conferences who turn down church collections and opt not to pass round the secret bag at meetings because they think their Conference does not need the money. A Conference without income still incurs basic central administration costs and there are many other parts of the Society that would appreciate any excess funds.

The final change is that Twinnage contributions will no longer be subject to a refund of Support Charges paid, bringing them into line with other internal donations made within the Society. The full cost of Twinnage will be paid direct by the Conference. For instance, a Twin with India currently costs a Conference £120



Conference Meeting, St Patrick's Huddersfield

directly and a further £30 is added by National Office and Central Councils. The amount going to India is £150. Going forwards the full £150 will be paid direct by the Conference.

The consultations revealed that many members did not know the same refunds were being paid on other donations to Twinnage and the Disaster Fund. If a Conference raises £1,250 it pays £250 Support charge to National and the Central Council, leaving it with £1,000. If that Conference then funds a Twinnage project for £1,000, National Office and Central Council have to repay back to Twinnage the £250 Support Charge originally collected from the Conference. This complicated the administration and the sharing of Support Charges between National Office, CCs and DCs. In adopting these changes, the Trustees and National Council are mindful of the impact on national Twinnage commitments and on Conferences with smaller income. Conferences and Councils are encouraged to show solidarity with other local Conferences and the wider Society and to help maintain the agreed levels of Twinnage support through prudent allocation of reserves, which should not normally exceed 3-6 months expenditure.

Updated guidance for Treasurers will be issued in the New Year. We will also be running training courses across the country in January and February to get Treasurers ready for the changes taking effect from the beginning of the new financial year, April 2017.



Membership Development

Why you need ongoing



Birmingham Meeting

Do you and your fellow members know everything you need to know about the SVP? Have you considered all the challenges you might face in your work and how to deal with them? If not, you would benefit from ongoing Membership Development.

Nobody's perfect and we can all learn more so that we improve and develop. That's the principal behind on-going Membership Development. Please read on as this brand new programme is for you. It is interactive, provides a lot of opportunity for you to talk with fellow members and, we hope, it will inspire you.

Introducing 'Faith in Action'

This new half-day course covers all the essentials that all members should know, including:

- Your vocation and the spirituality at its core.
- Catholic social teaching and how membership of the SVP helps you to respond to what is asked of you.
- Identifying the needs in your community.
- Key skills and techniques of the SVP visitor and befriender.
- Questions of safety and security.
- Problem visits and how to deal with them.

When you complete Faith in Action you will receive a certificate and verification will be placed on your database record. The aim is that all members will eventually have completed the course. As the course is rolled out we are unveiling it to Central Council Trainers at a series of Membership Development Forums around the country. We've already held one in Birmingham and there are three more planned:

- In Leeds on Saturday 7th January
- In Winchester on Saturday 28th January
- In Chester on Saturday 11th February

Any trainers able to attend one of these Forums should send in the booking form or email membership@svp.org.uk.

Members wanting to attend Faith in Action should contact their District or Central Council Trainers who will be able to provide the course once they themselves are familiar with the new materials.

Could YOU be a trainer?

The SVP urgently needs more trainers to conduct courses like the half-day Faith in Action session or provide membership development and guidance to small groups of members or even one-to-one.

We would provide you with training on our Train the Trainer Course and you would operate within your District and Central Council.

If you are interested in becoming a trainer email membership@svp.org.uk or send back the form opposite.

g Membership Development

Coming soon...

On-going Membership Development applies to all members – there's always more that we can learn to help us in our vocation to assist and serve those in need. Even Central Council Presidents recognise that there's more for them to know and understand about their role, which is why we'll be running CC Presidents' Training at National Office in the New Year. We're also working on dementia training in conjunction with the Alzheimer's Society that will qualify members as either 'Dementia Friends' or 'Dementia Companions' depending on the module selected. Watch this space for more details.

- **Fact Sheet 1: Volunteering with the SVP**
- **Fact Sheet 2: How to start an SVP Conference**
- **Fact Sheet 3: How to start an SVP 1833 Conference for Young Adults**
- **Fact Sheet 4: Starting SVP groups for Children and Young People**
- **Fact Sheet 5: How does the SVP find the people it helps?**
- **Fact Sheet 6: Fundraising ideas for an SVP Conference**
- **Fact Sheet 7: Gaining the support of a Parish Priest for a new Conference**
- **Fact Sheet 8: Useful sources of information**
- **Fact Sheet 9: The role of the Conference President and other officers**
- **Fact Sheet 10: How to complete a Secretarial Return**

How the Internet is boosting SVP knowledge and information

The Internet is helping the St Vincent de Paul Society spread knowledge and information to members in a way that couldn't have been dreamed of 20 years ago, let alone in Blessed Frédéric Ozanam's day. For example, there is a set of 10 Fact Sheets that can be downloaded from the Members' Area of the SVP website. They contain lots of useful information and can answer many of the questions that members often ask.

There are more on the way, including a Fact Sheet examining insurance for members. They can be downloaded from the Recruitment Section of the SVP website where there are lots of other useful recruitment resources such as posters, lectern addresses and copy for parish bulletins. If you are not on the Internet, order them using the form opposite.

Another new information resource supporting recruitment is our monthly e-bulletin, Spread the Word. Containing news, tips and ideas it is only available to members who register to receive it. You can register by emailing membership@svp.org.uk.



Membership Development Forums

Name:

Address:
.....
.....
.....

Conference:

I am a trainer and I would like to attend one of the following Membership Development Forums. (Please tick one)

- Leeds, Saturday 7th January**
- Winchester, Saturday 28th January**
- Chester, Saturday 11th February**

I am not a trainer but I am interested in becoming one. Please send me more information.

Please send me copies of the following Fact Sheets:

(Please state quantity required)

.....
.....
.....
.....



Please send this form to:
MEMBERSHIP, SVP, 9 LARCOM STREET,
LONDON SE17 1RX
or email: membership@svp.org.uk



Strategic Plan

Our Strategic Review

Over the last few months the Board of Trustees has been undertaking the annual strategic review process...



This year the Board enlisted the help of a third party to facilitate the process.

The first meeting focused on operational strategic plans, that is the Membership, Youth, Community Support Projects, Camps and Twinnage.

The second meeting considered the support operation including Communications, H&S, HR, Safeguarding and Governance.

The Board defined the overarching strategic objective for the Society as:

‘To increase the Society’s capacity to befriend those in need and to deliver agreed specialist services which support and complement our befriending activities’.

Here are the Strategic Objectives - By Area:

Membership Committee

Strategic Objectives:

- **Objective 1** - To increase membership by 200 (nett) per annum for 5 years.
- **Objective 2** - To increase the commitment of members in their ability to befriend those in need.
- **Objective 3** - To stimulate the Vincentian ethos in members.

Community Support Projects

Strategic Objectives:

- **Objective 1** - Grow the number of shops by 2022 to raise additional funds for the wider Society.
- **Objective 2** - Establish a clear model for our advice and support services and to extend advice and support to at least two other regions by 2022.
- **Objective 3** - Review and make a recommendation about the future of furniture provision within CSPs by 2018.
- **Objective 4** - Ensure services within Blackfriars and adjacent supported accommodation are fully integrated as a sustainable single project by 2018.
- **Objective 5** - Create an organisation where staff and volunteers are supported, trained and managed by having the correct capable people and reward frameworks in place.

Young Vincentian Strategic Objectives:

- **Objective 1** - To grow and develop the Young Vincentian programme.
- **Objective 2** - To sustain the Young Vincentian programme.

Twinnage Strategic Objectives:

- **Objective 1** - Improve governance and management in order to secure the future of Twinnage as a core activity of the SVP for England and Wales.
- **Objective 2** - Minimise the impact of Conferences going into abeyance and the resultant discontinuation of Twinnage agreements.

Strategic Plan

- **Objective 3** - Clarify the scope and sustainability of the Twinnage programme and its content and balance over time.
- **Objective 4** - Promote the activities of Twinnage and improve the balance between public subscriptions and Society generated funds.
- **Objective 5** - Promote awareness of Twinnage activities.

SVP Camps Strategic Objectives:

- **Objective 1** - To reduce / manage risk by improving safeguarding training and ensuring robust monitoring and audit procedures are actioned.
- **Objective 2** - Formalize leadership training and development program for young helpers who will be future camp leaders.
- **Objective 3** - To bring a higher level of Society oversight and support to regional camp management.
- **Objective 4** - To develop stronger partnerships between regional camps and their affiliated Central and District Councils as well as Diocesan safeguarding offices and Mini Vinnie groups in their catchment area.
- **Objective 5** - To embed the Vincentian Ethos into camp life.
- **Objective 6** - To monetize camp properties owned by the SVP to support operations.
- **Objective 7** - To increase the numbers of under privileged and disadvantaged children attending camp.

NB. The Board of Trustees agreed to undertake a review of all camps actively prior to the 2017 Camp year.



Support Committees Strategic Objectives

Communications Strategic Objectives:

- **Objective 1** - To communicate effectively with every member.
- **Objective 2** - To communicate effectively with all staff and volunteers.
- **Objective 3** - To communicate effectively with non-members to raise the SVP's profile.
- **Objective 4** - To speak effectively on social justice issues
- **Objective 5** - To communicate effectively with all stakeholders through a newly designed website.

Health & Safety Strategic Objectives:

- **Objective 1** - To identify H&S responsibilities at all levels in the Society and communicate to ensure all staff, members and volunteers know their responsibilities.
- **Objective 2** - To raise awareness of Health & Safety to all employees, members and volunteers.
- **Objective 3** - To raise staff and members' awareness on the necessity to report all incidents and accidents.
- **Objective 4** - To Regularly carry out audits on all SVP projects and monitor results.
- **Objective 5** - To raise awareness of the safety of movement and transport of goods and people.

Human Resources Strategic Objectives:

- **Objective 1** - Review Staff remuneration and benefits with an overview to improve recruitment and retention.
- **Objective 2** - Develop Performance Management within the Society.
- **Objective 3** - Achieve Investors in People (IIP) Society wide.
- **Objective 4** - Improve Sick Absence Management.
- **Objective 5** - Develop Vincentian ethos / culture at staff level.

Safeguarding

- **Objective 1** - Strengthen members' safeguarding awareness by systematic delivery of training programs at Festival and other group meetings.
- **Objective 2** - "Train the Trainers" - provide more training for Central Council Safeguarding Officers who, in turn, can deliver safeguarding training in their own geographical areas.
- **Objective 3** - Embed National Office oversight of safeguarding at camps through a systematic 3 year audit cycle.
- **Objective 4** - Strengthen relationship with Diocesan Safeguarding Officers through systematic outreach and networking programme.

Governance, Compliance & Administration

- **Objective 1** - Ensure compliance in all areas.
- **Objective 2** - Improve member satisfaction and deliver a high quality service.
- **Objective 3** - Implement Data Protection and related training.
- **Objective 4** - Review and update the Rule & Internal Statutes.

The next stage of the process is to produce budgets to support the various aspect of the strategic plan. The Trustees will then review the finance strategy accordingly. This will be critical as the development outlined above will not be without cost. Strategic plans can only be achieved through the work and buy-in of staff and members at all levels. For example the work which is being done on training will be worthless unless the members at Conference level identify with the need for training and are open to the opportunities which are provided then.

The various Board Committees which meet quarterly will monitor the strategic plan or plans within their Terms of Reference and report to the Board. Strategic planning is not intended to be a paper exercise. Rather it is the means to move the Society on, to keep it vital, focused and fit to deliver the Society's mission and vision.

St Vincent himself was a master strategist, responding to need with well-articulated and planned projects. He once noted:

"The poor suffer less from a lack of generosity than from a lack of organisation."

Hopefully continued strategic planning will ensure that Society delivers to the best of its ability in the years ahead, providing the optimum service of those in need.



Social Justice

Prison Visiting and how to become a visitor

Ingrid Philips writes: "There are currently 129 prisons in England and Wales with roughly 85,119 inmates. The number of prisoners in the UK varies but the general trend is a yearly increase. It is expected that by 2020 we will have a prison population of 90,000.

There are also Immigration Removal Centres (Detention Centres) run by the UK Border Agency, which though not classed as prisons, are very similar to prisons.

Among the 85,119 prisoners there are very many men and/or women who never get a visit from family or friends. They are cut off from the outside world, feel rejected, not wanted and lonely. And that's where you can come in. Official Prison Visiting can be rewarding, frustrating or heartbreaking, depending on the circumstances, but whatever the Official Prison Visitor's (OPVs) personal feelings, there is no doubt that he or she has made a difference to the prisoner who has been visited. Many times the OPV may leave the prisoner and feel they have not achieved anything or very little. But over time the cumulative effect of regular, friendly and non-judgemental contact with an unpaid, non-uniformed person from the outside, can, and more often than not does make a positive difference in the prisoner's life. There is also the very great need of the prisoner to speak to someone they can trust and who is not part of the establishment, so they can be themselves and don't have to worry that their conversation will be repeated. Over the many years I have been a prison visitor, I have been asked every time, 'will you come again?' and I always felt that I had received more than I had given. I have visited many different women, and I haven't forgotten any of them because they all managed to teach me something, sometimes trivial, sometimes life changing. It made me realise how incredibly lucky and privileged I am. If we are honest, we have to admit that without the grace of God, we could all be inside a prison. Most prisoners come from totally dysfunctional families and who am I to judge them?

What do you need to become a prison visitor?

Not much, the most important attributes are common sense, compassion, a sense of humour, Patience and to be able to listen. Never forget that you are there for the prisoner, not the prisoner for you. Just ask yourself: "Do I have time to spare, to share and to care?" And yes, I wrote patience with a capital P, because it can become very frustrating, when you stand at the gate to get in, and you have to wait half an hour because of some sudden crisis in prison, or when your prisoner does not



"I have never regretted being a prison visitor, indeed I feel privileged to be one."

show up for the appointed time because he or she does not feel like it today, though that is very rare.

How do I become an official prison visitor?

The easiest way to become an OPV is to contact the chaplaincy in your nearest prison. They might refer you to the official liaison officer for OPVs or they might send you an application form direct.



You will need to fill that in and provide two names as references for you. It will take time to become one, because governors, chaplaincy and prison staff in general are very, very busy. What did I say about patience. It starts here. You could also make initial enquiries direct to NAOPV, the National Association of Official Prison Visitors at: info@naopv.com. That will normally take even longer to process. You will have to learn about security in prisons and made aware of the 'Dos and Don'ts. OPVs have to abide by the rules of the prison they are going to.

There are allocated times for prison visiting, different in any prison. In some prisons you can share a cup of coffee or tea and even some biscuits or chocolates with your prisoner. Another reason why prisoners look forward to a visit. Their pocket money doesn't allow them many treats."

Reasons to welcome immigration

Vincentian Concern features the first of a two piece report on the history, background and current situation surrounding immigration and the refugee crisis. In this edition, we look at the two main definitions of migration and the theological and historical cases for welcoming migrants into our country.

There are sound theological, social and economic reasons for welcoming immigrants to the UK. In the context of the current widespread antagonism within England and Wales to current levels of immigration, it is important for SVP members to be (a) well informed about the facts of immigration (b) note the associated valuable social and economic benefits and (c) welcome immigrants particularly those who have fled from persecution in their own countries.

Definitions and Overall Picture:

Immigrants are classified as (A) Economic Migrants and (B) Refugees. The former (not a legal definition) are those seeking a better way of life by way of work opportunities, reunion with partners or family and education. The latter are those who can establish that they are fleeing persecution. Economic migrants to the UK greatly outnumber those seeking asylum viz 12 months to March 2016 - total 633,000 of which less than 45,000 claimed asylum and of these only about 23,000 were granted leave to remain. Note that out-migration (emigration) from the UK in the corresponding 12 months was between 250,000 and 280,000. In addition a significant number of failed asylum seekers were repatriated.

Refugee is a legal class, defined under the 1951 Geneva Convention. Several pathways can lead people to becoming refugees: some are outside their country when circumstances change for the worse and they can't return (refugees sur place); others have been forced to flee with nothing (acute refugees); others have seen what's coming and decided to get out before the emergency (anticipatory refugees). All may be "refugees", but their experiences are very different – and there is not yet a class for "ecological refugees", fleeing natural disasters (both sudden, like earthquake, fire and flood, and gradual, like deforestation or rising sea levels). The U.K. is home to less than 1% of the world's refugees.

The Theological Case:

The Old Testament prophets repeatedly warned rulers that they would be judged by their treatment of widows, orphans and strangers. The New Testament continues this stress. For example, Matthew 25 Vs 34 et seq. "Then the King will say to those on his right hand "Come, you whom my father has blessed, take your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you made me welcome". And verses 45 and 46 "And I tell you solemnly, in as far as you neglected to this to one of the least of these, you neglected to do it to me."



Pius XII's 1952 Apostolic Constitution *Exsul Familia Nazarethana* (The Flight of the Holy Family from Nazareth) is a magisterial magna carta on migration, systematically laying out the challenges and principles involved in providing spiritual assistance to migrants. He made no distinction between those who flee through fear of persecution and those impelled by want: all are human beings. Concerning "those who have been forced by revolutions in their own countries, or by unemployment or hunger to leave their homes and live in foreign lands".

The Historical Evidence of the Benefits of Immigration:

The entire population of the United Kingdom is composed of the descendants of migrants primarily from the Europe Asia land mass. The economic and cultural ascendancy of Britain over the past 300 years has been closely associated with the innovations introduced by migrant families notably the Huguenot and Jewish refugees fleeing persecution: textiles (Courtauld); steel and glassmaking (Daniel and Tyzack); heavy engineering (Brunel); chemical engineering (Mond); architecture (Pugin), banking (Rothschild) and art (Epstein). That invigoration of our society continues to this day. Furthermore much of the labour-intensive harvesting which is critical to the survival of our agricultural is heavily dependent on seasonal workers from Poland, Lithuania and Latvia.

Christopher Maxwell-Stewart and Philip Kerton

In the Spring edition of the VC we will look further at the issue of migration, examining the current crises, and the humanitarian dimension.



Society News

SVP Youth Fundraiser!



The Conference of St David and St Patrick in Haverfordwest held a coffee morning at its President's home on 21st May to raise money for the Vincentian Youth Fund. There were many donations of home-made cakes and six prizes for the free raffle which included chocolates, biscuits and SVP shopping bags. A great time was had by all with a large attendance, helping to raise a grand total of £370! After last year's successful formation of the Minnie Vinnies in the local school it is hoped that this year a Young Vincentian group will be formed within the parish.

Long Service Tribute

Members from SVP St Thomas Aquinas & All Saints Bletchley Conference gathered recently to honour Maria Collings in recognition of her 30 plus years of loyal and outstanding SVP service. Members clubbed together to treat Maria and her family to a meal and celebration at a local restaurant, where the tributes were led by Conference President John



Scott. A special 'thank you' was also made to her husband Patrick for his faithful and supportive role throughout the years. Maria continues to be a tireless visitor to the housebound, and has often used her considerable skills as a hairdresser for their benefit. Her Italian roots, and command of the Italian language, were great assets too when visiting the many Italians within the parish. Thank you for your service Maria!

Year of Mercy Action



The SVP Conference at St Teresa of the Child Jesus in Buckinghamshire, recently invited older members of the parish and local community to a talk about 'Mercy Ships': a charity providing medical services to some of the poorest countries in the world aboard its floating hospital. This interesting and inspiring talk was given by June and Ken Brazier and was followed by a tea party. The event formed part of the parish's Year of Mercy actions, bringing together people from the local community and helping us to open our hearts to those living on the outermost fringes of society, as Pope Francis has urged us. To find out more about the work of Mercy Ships visit: www.mercyship.org

Blooming Marvellous!

A sale of hanging baskets by the SVP at Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, Haigh and Blackrod, raised £300 to help fund a summer tea party for older people.

Parishioners gave generously at the sale which was held after two weekend Masses. Such was the success that the Conference is thinking of selling poinsettias at Christmas. Parishioners will decorate the church and altar with the plants to create a profusion of colour before taking them home.



Pictured: Alex (whose Dad organised the sale) with the impressive display of hanging baskets!

Full house at the Presbytery!



A lunch for elderly housebound friends was held by the St Mary's Conference in Leek. A turnout of 28 meant it was a full house at the Presbytery! It was a joyous social occasion and many old friends were reunited. The events are organised by the Conference to support those in care homes as well as the housebound.

The Big Mile Walk at the Tees Barrage



Members of the SVP met with walkers from Sustrans on 1st June 2016 for a mile long walk along the River Tees to 'step out against poverty'. Starting at the Tees Barrage, enthusiastic walkers braved the cool sea fret early in the morning to view the nature and wildlife along the route. Seals were spotted swimming in the river and walkers viewed a wildflower meadow close to the Newport Bridge, where the traffic roared past. Nature survives in the industrial landscape of Middlesbrough, a deprived socio-economic area.

Society News



SVP 'Altogether Now'

The Conference of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception in Wigan have started their third successful project funded by a £10,000 grant from Awards for All, the Big Lottery's fund for community activity. The project called 'Altogether Now' provides fun community activities for young people and their families in a safe and supportive environment. In February, a week long drama workshop was run in the local primary school. The hall was transformed into a courtroom and the week culminated in a fantastic performance of Goldilocks for friends and family to enjoy. By commissioning specialists the project was as inclusive as possible, the aim being to raise self-esteem and self-confidence through drama. Uniquely, there were no star performers as anyone who wanted to play the lead role had a turn! Many other activities have taken place and by the end of the year the community will have been strengthened through the provision of opportunities for children and their families to spend time together learning and having fun.

National Pilgrimage to Walsingham



From St Mary's King's Lynn and St Cecilia's in Dersingham, an almost full coach of pilgrims, elderly and not so elderly, well and not so well, enjoyed a drive through the Norfolk countryside on the 3rd July to the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham.

Bishop Doyle from Northampton led the pilgrimage, and he was assisted by diocesan priests and deacons. After the Mass, pilgrims settled in the grounds near the 14th station, shared a picnic, and met many friends. Thank you to Michael McMahon, recently appointed Central Council President for East Anglia, for his excellent organisation at such short notice. Thanks also to National President Adrian Abel, who was at Walsingham, local President Eamonn Campbell and to the many willing helpers who do so much to ensure that, when the day is over, all the pilgrims again say "Thank you for everything. It was a great day together, we'll come again, God willing."

In the picture: Standing: Bishop Peter Doyle, Seated in foreground, from left: Eamonn Campbell, president, King's Lynn SVP council, Father Henry MacCarthy, retired priest from the East Anglia diocese, Pauline McSherry, past president, King's Lynn SVP council.

Coffee Morning Success!



A coffee morning was organised by the Conference at St Mary's, Castletown and St Columba, Port Erin on the Isle of Man to raise funds for the Youth SVP. Members from both Parishes were involved in the preparation and serving of teas and coffees, home-baking, and donation of items for the raffle and 'new to you' stalls.

Annual Summer Party



Our Lady & St Thomas SVP Conference in Sheffield held their annual summer party at the De La Salle Association Club Rooms on Saturday 2nd July. Food and entertainment was provided to 46 invited guests, including housebound parishioners from O.L.S.T. R.C. Church, Holmhirst Road Methodist Church and St Chads C of E Church. Music and entertainment was provided by SVP supporter Martin Higgins and other SVP Conference members.

Lanchester Conference supports the Monday Club!

Since its inception nearly 5 years ago, members of the SVP Conference at All Saints Lanchester have been active supporters and organisers of the Monday Club, which provides an evening of fun and social interactions for older, vulnerable or socially isolated members of the local village.



Guests with mobility problems are given lifts to and from the parish centre in volunteers' cars. When they arrive, guests enjoy a quiz, tea and homemade cakes, games of bingo and dominoes and most importantly, a chance to chat and enjoy the company of friends. At Christmas time there is a trip to a local pantomime, members' birthdays are celebrated with a gift and the end of term parties are legendary! By supporting the Monday Club members are working to provide friendship and combat loneliness whilst the proverbial good time is had by all.



Society News

Mini Vinnie Disc Appeal



Year 4 pupils from the parish of St John the Baptist RC Primary School in Burnley recently completed an appeal across the school for new and used CDs and DVDs to

help raise money for a local food bank 'Secure Place'. The parish SVP joined with the parish itself in supporting the appeal. The discs will be sold via the food bank's online network to raise money to purchase food for the 150-200 food parcels it delivers each week. In excess of 550 discs and a £50 cheque was presented by President Reece Helps to the food bank organisers. The lunchtime group of eleven pupils have undertaken several projects covering Vincentian themes during the year and have enjoyed guest speakers sharing their knowledge of the Christian plight in the Holy Land, the aims and ideals of CAFOD, and approaches to the homeless and street begging. All eleven are keen to continue their Mini Vinnie actions when they become Year 5 Pupils.

Vintage Afternoon Tea Celebrations!

Altar servers from St Margaret Clitherow Parish, York, held an afternoon tea as part of the Year of Mercy celebrations in aid of the Ethiopian Appeal. At the close of the afternoon the altar servers, accompanied by SVP members (with parental permission) took cake boxes to the housebound. Those visited were delighted not only with the cakes, but with the opportunity to chat to a young person.



Beware of Scammers

On Tuesday 12th September the SVP 'Coffee & Company' at St. Teresa's in Beaconsfield received a visit from the police. Neighbourhood officer Vijay Desai described the latest scams operating in the Beaconsfield area. He said that 12 people in the area had been conned out of considerable amounts of money, with older members of the community being particularly vulnerable. Attendees received advice about the best way to avoid falling victim to the scammers and leaflets giving further information were provided.

SVP Training in Bristol

Margaret Clark SVP President of Middlesbrough District attended the July Training Course in Bristol accompanied by Pepsie a visitor from SVP Abuja Nigeria. Attendees were interested to hear about SVP and communities in Africa. Pepsie visits a nearby camp of 400 displaced people per week in Nigeria.



Congratulations Sally!

St Clements Ewell Conference recently recognised Sally Mason's 10 years as Conference Secretary and her 16 years of SVP service; she is continuing to carry on with her other SVP duties. Sally is seen here cutting her celebration cake. Margaret Tremayne, on the left of the picture



is Chair and will soon be standing aside after 10 years in office but continuing to add to her 20 years of SVP work. Chaplain Father Graham Bamford regularly attends meetings and provides guidance and support as he has done throughout his 30+ years with the SVP. A quick survey revealed that 9 active members plus 3 recently retired / deceased members have currently served over 250 years in the SVP.

SVP Helps Children from Chernobyl



Every year a group of children from Chernobyl visit the Isle of Man and this year the Conference of St. Anthony's in Onchan was asked to help with the visit.

The Conference members agreed to pay for a morning's visit to a local Laserblast attraction which the children greatly enjoyed!

SVP Parish Trip to St. Donat's Castle



In August, SVP members from Our Lady and St. Illtyd's (Llantwit Major) and St. Cadoc's (Cowbridge) and a group of parishioners enjoyed an afternoon visit to the nearby St. Donat's Castle in the Vale of Glamorgan, in the company of parish priest Fr Mark Rowles. Each year the Conference funds and organises a trip for older or housebound parishioners who cannot get out as much as they might wish. Their guide was Mr. Alan Hall, who told the group about St. Donat's Castle and its rich history, after which a cream tea was enjoyed in the dining hall.

The party concluded the afternoon by exploring the grounds at their leisure, enjoying the magnificent view of the coast and the Bristol Channel, and went home having thoroughly enjoyed and benefited from the experience.

'Full of Life' Fair

The St. Elizabeth's Richmond Conference had their debut stall at the 'Full of Life Fair' on 7th October at Twickenham Rugby stadium. The free annual event, now in its 5th year, is organised by Richmond Council to celebrate older residents in the Borough. As well as



being an enjoyable day out and providing a meeting place for older residents and the various agencies that work with them, the event aims to enhance digital skills, promote healthy and independent living, and tackle isolation and loneliness. Over 1200 people attended the event, with shuttle buses provided to bring the elderly to the stadium. A complimentary lunch was provided and there was the opportunity to try out a range of activities throughout the day from Bollywood dance to social media workshops. Visitors were able to talk with and seek advice from over 75 agencies who were in attendance, representing businesses, as well as the social, housing, services, activities, fitness and health sectors.

Pictured: Celebrity Guest Ballet Dancer Wayne Sleep and Volunteer Jane Mann at the SVP Stall.

Annual Mass of Anointing St. Margaret Clitherow, York



On Thursday, 13th October the parish Conference held their annual Mass of Anointing. Canon Patrick Harney and parish priest Fr Kevin Trehy concelebrated Mass and anointed the sick, many of whom find it difficult to attend Mass regularly due to infirmity. The Mass proved to be a very spiritual

and moving occasion, and was followed by friendship and chat over afternoon tea provided by parishioners in the meeting room.

Birthday Celebrations!

Robert Ashley, of the St Hugh and St John the Baptist Conference in Timperley, Cheshire, recently celebrated his 80th birthday



and as part of the celebrations was presented with a long service recognition reflecting his 64 years of membership in the SVP. Congratulations Robert and thank you for your loyal service!



Cake & Coffee!

On Sunday 4th September the St Columba's SVP Conference in Halifax held a coffee morning in the Church hall after Mass. Lots of parishioners attended enjoying cakes, a tombola and raffle as well as toast and coffee. They raised £330 for the SVP Youth and a good time was had by all!



Joan Perkins from the Sevenoaks SVP Conference took part in the British Military Mud Run on 2nd October in Eridge, Tunbridge Wells to help raise money for the SVP. Joan saw this as a great opportunity to keep up her fitness and raise money for the local branch which has lots of demands but often not enough cash to fulfil the requests. Joan was encouraged by husband Andrew, so much so that he ended up doing the mud run too! The day of the mud run was wet, windy, cold and bleak but the couple went for it, gun ho! managing to complete the challenging 6.25km course in under an hour and a half. The initial aim was to raise around £250.00, but this target was achieved within hours of the JustGiving page going live, and the donations kept coming in. Together the couple have raised a whopping £2,500 (incl. gift aid)!

Rehearsal lunch a hit!

The Conference of the Sacred Heart, St Anthony and St Clare, Our Lady of Peace in Risca, near Newport in Wales, decided some time ago to hold a Christmas Day lunch for people on their own or in need of company.



To see how they would cope, a Sunday lunch was held for parishioners and local people at a charge of £5 per head. The 'dry run' went very well: 64 people were served in total and the team managed to pick up a few ideas for the main event!

Summer Tea Party Success



Following a successful pulpit appeal by Siobhan Garibaldi and Robert Chronnell, the Enfield Conference has increased from 2 to 12 members, most of whom are on a steep learning curve! Since their initial meeting earlier in the year, the Conference planned and successfully

organised a summer tea party for 70 people, which received glowing feedback. Many who attended asked if it could be repeated and they have since heard of one man possibly coming back to the Church. Working as a team on what had seemed an impossible task at the outset, the Conference came together, realising they had skills of which they were not aware. Since then some of the group have attended the Festival meeting and an SVP training day, where they learnt a lot and met many lovely and enthusiastic SVP members from other London Conferences. Their aim is to become a strong Conference supporting those in need and to fundraise using their many talents.



Daughters of Charity



Originally made up of a group of peasant girls brought into Paris to help the poor on the streets of the city, there are now around 16,000 Sisters based in 90 countries around the world, still serving the poor in a variety of ways.

Unlike most religious orders, the Daughters of Charity were not founded as a religious life. Provincial, Sr Ellen Flynn explains: "We are officially in Canon Law a Society of Apostolic Life. This means we commit for one year at a time. Although most of us sign up for life, fundamentally our vowed commitment is renewed every year."

The Daughters of Charity have as their charism "Given to God, in community, for the mission." "We are 'given to God' because our life is completely faith based, we have a prayer life which draws us, calls us and sustains us. We are 'in community' because an essential aspect of our life is living together in order to support and sustain each other in mission, and we work with people who are experiencing poverty, as is the common mission throughout the Vincentian family", the Provincial explains.

The Daughters very much live out Vincent's words when he said "Leave God to God", meaning 'go and answer the door when someone rings even if you are engaged in prayer'. That person at the door is their prayer life and the Daughters are busy 'answering the call' of people in need in a variety of ways. In the UK there are currently around 140 Daughters. Their work ranges from the projects run for different marginalised groups, to

Founded in Paris in 1833 by St Louise de Marillac together with St Vincent de Paul, the Daughters of Charity has had a long and vibrant history living in community and helping the poor.

chaplancy work in hospitals, to parish work such as visiting and supporting parishioners in their homes.

The Daughters have a ministry called 'Prayer and Presence', also known to some as 'retirement' because "we are never off mission even when we retire (or perhaps even after we die. Who knows?!)." Sr Ellen explains: "We have Sisters who have retired who are still touching people's lives. Where ever you live you are in touch with people – inserted into a wider community whether as a parishioner or in a care situation or a retirement situation. That quality of being in touch – that presence, is part of our ministry."

There are a significant number of the Daughters in care and retirement, with the average age in England being 75. Sr Ellen cites the challenges in contemporary society caused by a decline in vocations which is having a knock on effect on her Order. She sees this as being linked to the way society has changed. "Our whole reason for being is the service of people experiencing poverty. When we were founded there were very few ways that you could do that especially as a woman. Nowadays there are a lot of ways in which young people can help the poor. They no longer need to belong to a religious Order to do so."

To deal with the challenge Daughters of Charity Services, 'DCServices' has been set up as a separate parent company for all the works the Order has founded. These projects range from care for families of prisoners, helping people with learning difficulties living in the community, domiciliary care for older and disabled people, and a drop-in service for migrants and refugees. The projects are largely lay led, but retain the presence of the Daughters on the Board. Sr Ellen explains that the Daughters have set about ensuring that their pastoral ethos and values are retained in the projects, and have introduced a programme of Vincentian Values training for all staff involved in the projects.

Sr Ellen believes that the vocation of the Daughters 'gives hope' to people in need. "Our Ministry, whatever field it is in is essentially relational and essentially incarnational. It's the individual human being as a whole person who we relate to. And we bring hope to the individual, but very often we receive hope too. We are all human beings who need to be treated with dignity no matter what."

Year of Collaboration

Welcoming the Stranger during our Year of Collaboration



The Vincentian family is celebrating the 400th Anniversary of the birth of our charism in 2017.

The first Vincentian organisations dedicated to service of the poor were conceived or established in 1617 and lay the foundations for all the other Vincentian organisations to come, including the St Vincent de Paul Society.

This anniversary is being celebrated world-wide, with the theme of welcoming the stranger. Fr Gregory Gay (CM) announced the celebrations by drawing attention to the plight of the stranger in its many forms: the immigrant, the refugee, the displaced, the estranged and the marginalised and isolated who feel like strangers in their own communities.

In England and Wales the Vincentian family has decided to mark the celebrations with three key events. The celebrations will commence in February 2017 with a Mass in Southwark cathedral organised by the AIC and the Daughters of Charity. This will be followed by a meeting and Mass in Liverpool cathedral in June 2017 organised by the SVP. The final celebration will be in Scotland with Mass in Carfin in September 2017.



The meeting itself will take place at the Adelphi Hotel in Liverpool and will conclude with Mass at 3pm in the Metropolitan Cathedral. Speakers already confirmed at the meeting are Sarah Teather, from the Jesuit Refugee Service and John Battle, SVP patron and former MP. We will also hear from members who are actively involved in working with the stranger in our midst, including Bertrand Ousset, former President of the Society in France, where they have launched an initiative for growing closer to the stranger. A full programme will be issued shortly but the booking form is enclosed in this magazine. Members are reminded that the cost of one delegate per conference may be taken from Conference funds as attendance constitutes training.

Attendees are welcome either as day delegates on one or both days or for the full two days residential. Attendees from all parts of the Vincentian family are welcome on both days. Members are encouraged to attend one or more of the events, both to celebrate the charism and to reflect on the theme which is so pertinent in society today, "welcoming the stranger".

Further details on all events will be issued as they become available, through the Society e-newsletter and the website.

A booking form is enclosed with this VC.

St George's Cathedral, Southwark

25th February, 10.30am - Mass celebrated by Archbishop Peter Smith. Homilist Fr Paul Roche CM. Speaker Mr Julius Nkafu MCI Arb.

Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral

24th June, 3pm - Mass celebrated by Archbishop Malcolm McMahon.

Carfin (near Glasgow) 30th September, 2pm

Mass celebrated by Archbishop Leo Cushley.

The SVP event in June will form part of the Society's annual national meeting. The meeting, which will follow the theme, "welcoming the stranger" will take place over 2 days on the 23rd and 24th June.



Health & Safety

Have a great party.. Safely!



Beaconsfield colourful Christmas Lunch

As we approach Christmas our Vincentian activities often increase. Many Conferences organise parties, others may offer trips to a pantomime or shopping expeditions. Inevitably there is always a risk that an accident could take place. However with proper planning such accidents can be minimised. Additionally, if one is prepared for an accident, one can dramatically reduce the effects.

Risk Analysis: The basic rule of Health & Safety is that one does a risk analysis. This can be started by simply listing the sequence of events then placing alongside them the risks associated with each activity. Let us think about a Christmas party and what is involved:

- Picking people up
- Transporting them to the event
- Transfer from car to hall
- Feeding the guests
- Toilet facilities
- Activities at the party
- Returning to the car
- Transporting them home

Transport: The transport process has risks. How mobile are the guests, do they have wheel chairs or Zimmer frames? How able are the drivers? Can they lift safely? Are they insured to take passengers? These can all be checked beforehand.

When they arrive at the hall, is it possible to park safely? Are there steps? Are there enough welcomers? Is the room an appropriate temperature? None of these questions is beyond the vast majority of us, even without specific training.

Food: This is where we need some expertise. It is essential that anyone directly handling food has some knowledge of the hygiene rules required by law. Most local authorities run courses where one can learn about hygiene, food storage and preparation and the dangers associated with food. If none of the members have such a qualification you really must bring in someone who has, such as canteen supervisors, school dinner staff or people who regularly do voluntary work for luncheon clubs. These people should have a certificate to show their competency.

One also has to consider the needs of the individuals. Are there dietary requirements, remember about one in ten are likely to be diabetic. An increasing number of people (mainly younger people) are allergic to certain foods such as nuts.

Take care with alcohol, it increases the risk and may be inappropriate.

Activities: If there is going to be much moving around during the party, ensure there are no obstacles, as many older people have reduced eye sight. Toilets should be well signposted and attendants must ensure that people requiring

assistance receive it from an appropriate person. Primary school toilets are frequently unsuitable for adults with reduced mobility. These are just some of the common sense questions you need to pose.

Accidents do happen: Are you prepared in the event of an accident? Some simple precautions beforehand can save a lot of anguish. Do we have a contact person should our guest become ill or have an accident? Have we a trained first aider?

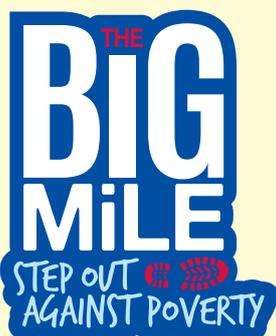
Report Accidents: It is part of the Society's rules that accidents must be reported to National Office. This is partly for legal reasons but it also allows us to learn from the mishap and advise members on how to avoid similar accidents recurring. It may sound alarmist, but if you could imagine being hounded by the press or having to give evidence in a court, consider how much thought you had put into caring for those in your charge.

Toys: Finally, many Conferences will be planning to present hampers to families in need over Christmas and wondering if they can include second-hand toys for children. A good quality second-hand toy can make a great present for a child and the good news is that there are no health and safety reasons for not including them! That said do make sure that the items are clean and in good condition. Look out for small items that could pose a choking hazard to young children and that toys are for the correct age group and from reputable sources that comply with standards (e.g. The Toys (Safety) Regulations 2011). Remember as well to buy batteries for toys that need them – that way there won't be a temptation to remove batteries from smoke alarms.

Conclusion: It is not the intention of the Society to put barriers in your way preventing you from giving people a good time. Quite the reverse! We want members to feel confident in organising events that will bring happiness to those we seek to help, but we want to do it in the confidence that we have done our best to ensure there are no tragedies through our neglect or lack of preparations. So go out and organise that event, but use your common sense and record your risk assessments just in case.

The Big Mile - Stepping out against poverty

This past summer, after much hard work organising and planning, members of the SVP pushed to raise funds and awareness of poverty in the UK by taking a step on the Big Mile.



The Big Mile is just as the name suggests, people signed up to take part in mile long walks as a step against poverty. It is a great event where anyone can join in - families, school children, older people, younger people, people with and without disabilities - anyone who wants to take a practical stand against poverty.

This was the second year of the Big Mile and the number of participants increased. We had a total of 13 walks nationwide in Manchester, Middlesbrough, Shrewsbury, Southwark, Tyne and Westminster Central Councils. A great number of people took part. 403 in total from Conferences, parishes and people who just joined up along the way. Additional support was provided from the local sea life in Middlesbrough when two seals decided to join in!

One of the keenest walkers came to the Big Mile event in Whitstable. Claire was inspired by watching the Paralympic athletes run with prosthetic limbs, racing for gold with every last breath. "If they can do it, so can I!" she said. And so, when the opportunity to take part in The Big Mile came along, she decided to give it a go, with the support of her friends and her new four wheeled walking frame. A mile may not seem a lot to some but for Claire it would be more like a marathon. Against the odds, Claire walked that mile along the Whitstable seafront without a hitch - and then climbed the steep bank at the finish to join the other walkers at the top for a picnic. How did she feel? "Amazing!" How did she do it? "I found the company made it easier," she says. But Claire's efforts alone raised over £300 for the SVP.

All in all, total of £6,438.09 was raised from walks and donations. Hopefully even more people will participate in 2017. It's a brilliant way of meeting people from different places, vocations and areas of the SVP, and it provides a chance to hold a fun community event where those who have little to no knowledge of the SVP can gain greater insight into the importance of the Society's work.

If you feel like the Big Mile is something you would like to be a part of next year, please keep your eye out for more information on the upcoming event in SVP publications. Following a review there will be some changes to the initiative and these will be communicated shortly.



Best Walker of the Group



The **Cash4Coins** initiative has raised over £2500 this year alone! Now that the summer is over, collect your old currency and all those foreign notes and coins that you brought back from your holiday and which are just gathering dust at the back of a drawer.

The **cash4coins** company (www.cash4coins.co.uk) will convert your leftover foreign coins into sterling. Once you've collected over 5kg of coins call them for free collection and they will convert it into sterling with half for national office and half for your conference.

Virtual Balloon Race - COMING SOON!

We are holding a Virtual Balloon race starting on 16th March 2017! The reason we don't use real balloons is because they are not environmentally safe and kill animals and birds. All balloons are virtually launched in Paris birthplace of the SVP! You can buy one balloon for just £3 to support SVP Youth Vincentians and local schools. The balloon that travels the farthest before it pops wins a cash prize, so give it a go! Further details will be available on www.svp.org.uk soon!



SVP Structure

Structural Review

Thanks to all members who have participated in the focus groups with Fr Jim Sweeney, who has been tasked with leading the SVP organisation review.

The first phase of the review consisted of 12 focus groups meetings in selected locations around the country. These both took place in May 2016. In brief the findings at this stage can be summarised as follows:

SVP Strengths

- Commitment and dedication of members
- Support received from parishes
- Supportive district councils
- National and International reach
- Supportive national infrastructure
- Growth of Young Vincentians
- Voluntary character
- Spiritual vocation

SVP Weaknesses / Challenges

- Poor public profile
- Social trend towards individualism/personal autonomy
- Parochial isolation
- Increasing reporting requirements
- Member recruitment
- Lack of members prepared to take leadership roles
- Poor internal communications
- Changing church structure - parish clusters
- Lack of spiritual direction
- Declining attendance at festival meetings

The three most significant concerns for the future:

- **Recruitment**
- **Age of membership**
- **Leadership and filling of officer roles**

Suggestions for change in practice and structures:

- **More recruitment**
- **Enhance the public profile**
- **Greater investment in resources**
- **Paid support at CC level**
- **Greater clarification and differentiation of roles**
- **Greater use of technology**

Further meetings took place in October with representatives from DCs, CCs, National Council and National Office, as well as representatives from previous focus groups.

Our future is built on firm foundations

As we look forward as a Society, we remember those who have led our organisation to where it is today.

SVP National Presidents:

1844 - 1852	Charles Joseph Pagliano
1852 - 1898	George Blount
1898 - 1909	Marquess of Ripon
1909 - 1920	Sir John Knill
1920 - 1936	Major J. F. Wegg Prosser, K.S.G.
1936 - 1944	J. McKnight
1943 - 1960	Lt.-Col. John Dallas Waters, C.B., D.S.O - RIP 1967
1960 - 1967	Leo Edgar
1967 - 1973	Tom Lucas
1973 - 1978	Peter Willis
1978 - 1982	Duncan Todd - RIP 1982
1982 - 1987	Lew Collet
1987 - 1992	Bill Lawson
1992 - 1997	Austin Fagan
1997 - 2002	Jim O'Connor
2002 - 2007	James McDaid
2007 - 2012	Michael Worthington
2012 - 2017	Adrian Abel

Next Steps...

The research team met with the Trustees in November, and are now preparing a draft of the final report. This will be shared with the Board and National Council in the New Year.

“Volunteers all are part of the Body of Christ”

In this feature we continue our coverage of SVP patrons. Ann Widdecombe, a patron of the SVP and a Catholic convert from the Anglican Church, is a former Conservative government MP known for her strong opinions and outspokenness.

She is passionate about combatting loneliness in society and here she talks to Vincentian Concern about, how Christ and St Paul are her inspiration and why the SVP's work with the lonely and isolated is so important.

Following her time in politics, Ann became quite a celebrity and attracted attention recently when she appeared in TV's *Strictly Come Dancing*. Asked how she reconciles the Christian values of meekness and humility with the more worldly qualities of fame and celebrity she says: “Tell that to Saint Paul – not one to be shy or retiring. First he was at the forefront of the campaign against Christianity, then had his famous journey to Damascus. I mean he dominated the Christian scene and in the end stood up to Caesar himself. So don't talk about Christians as if they are all meek and mild. Look at Christ – we are tempted to say “gentle Jesus meek and mild”. Good heavens! He took a whip and drove the merchants out of the temple. He broke the Sabbath in the terms in which it was then understood. He feasted with publicans and sinners. He was condemned as a glutton and a winebibber. We look at Christ's life and he was not meek and mild. He was extremely unconventional in his time.”

Ann, who has never married and remains single, lives alone on Dartmoor, where she says she relishes the peace and beauty. Asked whether she experiences loneliness either herself or in the community around her, she says that her life is “full”, and that loneliness is more of an urban phenomenon. “You can feel lonely in a crowd”, she says.

For Ann one of the massive factors causing isolation in today's society is family breakup. “Look at Dickensian families, Victorian families, there were multiple relatives living in the house. That then became the nuclear family. And now with the divorce rate and re-partnering, and the assumption that children must move out as soon as they graduate from university we are being forced into smaller and smaller units. People are going into much more diverse situations and no longer stay in the locality in which they grow up.”

Ann herself grew up in a full household with her grandmother living in the family home until Ann was 14. She says her own mother grew up in a house with her parents and a bachelor uncle.

One of the consequences of today's custom towards working parents is that “parents want to spend their home time with their



Ann Widdecombe, SVP Patron

“The SVP is not about charitable giving, but charitable living...”

young children meaning there is now a shortage of time to go on others outside of the family.” She says this can create shortfalls for charities who depend on volunteers.

Of the SVP she says: “The SVP embodies service to others. You can't divorce faith from good works as James makes clear. And good works are an outward sign of faith. The SVP is not about charitable giving, but charitable living.”

For Ann this service to others is the basis of the Gospels: “putting others before yourself, sometimes at the inconvenience of time.”

Ann speaks of volunteers being part of the Body of Christ, offering different skills and gifts. “You can volunteer time, money, combination, also brains. Sometimes people sit on committees and organise. They are contributing something else. Everyone does something different. Volunteers are like all the little twigs out on the branches. We think of the vine and the branches but I say “don't forget about the twigs” who are the little ones on the end but need to feed on the vine. We are all part of one body, but don't forget the little twigs.”

To read the full profile on Ann Widdecombe in the Catholic Times visit www.svp.org.uk/InThePress



CEO's Message

A flame still burning brightly

"It is certain that when charity abides in a soul it takes entire possession of all its power; charity allows it no rest; it is an ever growing fire." *St Vincent de Paul*



I was recently at a meeting of Catholic charities when there was a discussion about asylum seeker projects. Reports were given by Catholic Care (Leeds), Caritas Salford and Fr Hudson's Society (Birmingham) about new initiatives in their area and each report had one thing in common : SVP Members volunteering at the heart of the project, giving of their time and enthusiasm. The willingness to do more, to get involved to help others in new ways is a typical trait of an SVP member, in whose soul "charity abides".

Following the recent Awareness Month, National Office received a call from a lady who had taken one of the Awareness Month postcards home from church and had spent 2 months looking at it and thinking about the work depicted. When she phoned it was because she had felt moved to find out more and to take the next step to becoming a member. A simple postcard had fanned the flame of the "ever growing fire" of which Vincent spoke.

The Vincentian charism inspires, enriches and, for many, becomes a life long vocation. 400 years on from the founding of the charism Vincent would be pleased to see the flame still burning brightly.

Elizabeth Palmer, CEO

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

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

Jim Burke-Gaffney - co-founder, long serving member and former President and Treasurer of St Francis Conference, Ascot, and later Ascot & Bracknell Conference.

Michael Cahill - longstanding member and former President of St. John the Evangelist's Conference, Bradford, West Yorkshire.

Joan Corrin - longstanding member and Conference President of St Anthony of Padua Conference Isle of Man.

Robert Crane - DC President and longstanding member of Westminster Cathedral Conference and DC president of Westminster and Marlybone District Council.

Sharon Deegan - member and former President of St. John the Evangelist's Conference, Bradford, West Yorkshire.

Maura Donohue - longstanding member of St. John the Evangelist's Conference, Bradford, West Yorkshire.

Michael (Mick) Fitzgerald - long serving member and President of the St Cecilia's Church Conference, Dersingham, Norfolk, President of the local DC and formerly the CC.

James (Jim) Forshaw - long serving member and President of St Peter and St Paul Conference, St Helens, SW Lancs.

Mary Hayter - wife of Deacon Dwight Hayter of Brentwood diocese.

John Higgins - long serving member, President of St. Bernadette's Conference and Secretary to Manchester South DC.

Joseph Holmes - member and former secretary of St. Philip Neri Conference, Mansfield, Notts.

Caroline Hunt - member of Our Lady of Ransom Conference, Eastbourne.

Patricia Monkhouse - past member of St. Mary's Conference, Bishop Auckland.

Lawrence Rigamonti - longstanding member of Our Lady of Ransom Conference, Eastbourne.

Ken Waller - long serving member, former Treasurer and Spiritual Advisor of Our Lady of the Annunciation Conference, Addiscombe, Croydon.

May they rest in peace.

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





Open any copy of The Tablet and you'll find fresh ideas, fascinating stories and an often controversial read.

- **Independent** – discover a broad range of views on society, religion and politics
- **Informed** – enjoy lively, thoughtful writing from leading global figures
- **Insightful** – deepen your understanding of what's really shaping our world

The Tablet offers an independent Catholic perspective on topics relevant to all of us:

World issues / Religion / Politics / Society / Books / Arts

So if you prefer exploring ideas to entrenched opinions, it's time to take The Tablet.

MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE

WEBSITE & ARCHIVE ACCESS – ALSO VIA TABLET & MOBILE

• Choose your subscription now (and save up to 50%) at www.thetablet.subscribeonline.co.uk or telephone 01795 414855, quoting promotion code 3878

Sources of Funding

CHAS Catholic Housing Aid Society (West London)

CHAS (West London) was established in 1965 and the aim of the charity is to assist anyone with a financial housing problem. For instance, the Trustees would consider supporting someone with rent arrears who may be in danger of being evicted. However we are a 'specialised fund' and cannot make grants for more general purposes. The fund works closely with the St Vincent de Paul Society throughout England and Wales and, where applications are made through the SVP, we would expect the SVP to be committed to the particular case they are submitting with time and appropriate funds. Although £250.00 is a general amount for a grant, consideration is given to the circumstances of each case and the amount is varied, accordingly.

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

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

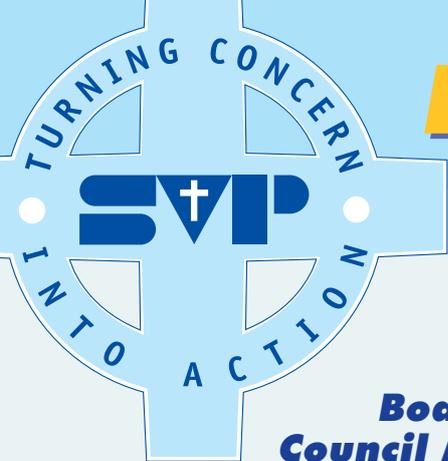
David Young's Charity

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

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

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.davidyoungcharity.co.uk or email trustees@davidyoungcharity.co.uk

Registered Charity Number 238877



Notice Board

2017 Board & National Council Meeting Dates

Board Meetings

- 2nd February** - London National Office
- 17th March** - Hayes Conference Centre - Swanwick
- 4th May** - London National Office
- 15th June** - London National Office
- 14th September** - London National Office
- 27th & 28th October** - Hinsley Hall (*Residential*)
- 24th November** - Hinsley Hall (*Before National Council*)

National Council Meetings

- 17th - 18th March** - Hayes Conference Centre - Swanwick
- 22nd June** - Liverpool (*Day before National Meeting*)
- 24th - 25th November** - Hinsley Hall (*Residential*)

National Meeting

- 23rd & 24th June 2017** - Liverpool

Inviting content contributions for VC Spring Edition 2017

Next deadline for sending news and information for VC Spring Edition 2017 is 27th February 2017. Letters and articles for inclusion in the magazine should be submitted to: 9 Larcom Street, Walworth, London SE17 1RX or email anitab@svp.org.uk

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

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

Editorial Policy

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

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

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

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

About the SVP

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

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

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

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



Picture Copyright Gordon Wilkinson. All Rights Reserved.

