

Saint Vincent de Paul (SVP) Society: St. Vincent's Parish, Crookes - First Annual Report, 2021

Who are we?

We are a group of parishioners who provide a befriending service to individuals and families who might be isolated, vulnerable or be in need of practical and financial assistance.

In addition, we get involved in activities that promote the development of a strong, active Vincentian Spirituality in our parish, and beyond.

Currently, we have 6 full members and 2 auxiliary members: Russell Brynes (President), John Rigby (Treasurer), Peter Delamere, Christina Farleigh, James O'Malley (Secretary), Father Paddy Walsh (Spiritual Director), Columba Timmins (Auxiliary) and Rachel O'Hara (Auxiliary).

As a relatively newly-reformed Conference, we are grateful for ongoing mentoring support provided by Lance Philpott, SVP Membership Development Officer – Hallam Diocese.

What do we do?

As previously stated, primarily we are a befriending service. Over the past 12-months we have:

- actively supported the parish initiative of regular 'keep-in-touch' telephone calls to potentially isolated and vulnerable parishioners during the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions. Understandably, in all but a few exceptional circumstances, home visits to SVP beneficiaries had to be suspended from March 2020 onwards, which made joining the parish effort a natural fit.
- provided financial help to cover the cost of furniture and electronic equipment to families in need, for example: a laptop computer required to support a 17-year old student about to enrol at a further education college; and the delivery of a bespoke-made bed to help a young child with autism get a good night's sleep.
- responded to one-off and ongoing requests from beneficiaries for help with routine tasks such as shopping or garden-watering, and for miscellaneous transportation needs, eg., to doctor's appointments, church services, etc.
- coordinated the purchase and distribution of regular food parcels to families in need, who were referred to us by staff at Notre Dame school. Initially, this came about through a covid- response partnership with Morrison's supermarket, but it has continued to be SVP-led since that arrangement ended some months ago.

In terms of developing a strong, active Vincentian community, we have initiated and partnered with other agencies and organisations on a range of projects:

- we were instrumental in creating a “mini-Vinnies” group at St Marie’s primary school. In keeping with the Vincentian ethos, the group - led by (insert teacher’s name) - have produced little cheery gifts, cards and messages for the parishioners on the parish ‘keep-in touch’ list. Feedback shows how well-received they were.

- conference members are represented on a diocesan working group sponsoring the settlement of a Syrian family in the South Yorkshire region.

Our plans for 2021/22

Our principle aim is to try to re-establish home visits and personal contact as close to how things were done prior to the start of the pandemic. Clearly, the telephone approach has been seen to work extremely well over the last year, so a combination of the two might be the way forward.

In terms of new projects, we will:

- work alongside staff at Notre Dame school to create a Youth SVP group that, hopefully, will emulate the success of the mini-Vinnies at St Marie’s.

- finalise a ‘twinning’ arrangement with an SVP conference in Sudan. This will involve making a modest annual donation to provide invaluable funds to an African community, and to provide Vincentian support through ongoing email contact.

- to design a recruitment and funding strategy so that St Vincent’s SVP Conference can develop its reach in the local community where there are likely to be many unmet needs, particularly as the post-pandemic effects on the economy & individual and family lives are more clearly understood.

Would you care to join us?

We would love to expand our membership and this can be done in one of two ways. First, Full members meet every 2nd Tuesday for an hour or so, to review and plan our activities (and to pray a little). This has been done via Zoom of late, for obvious reasons, but we hope to resume meetings in the parish rooms as soon as possible. Full members need to undertake a routine DBS check for safeguarding reasons,

As an Auxiliary member, there is no requirement to attend the twice-monthly meetings. Undertaking the DBS process is also optional, although this may preclude the member from certain activities where safeguarding could be an issue.

It is important to stress that both Full and Auxiliary members are free to devote as much or as little time as they can to the befriending and development activities,

which makes it amenable to creating a larger pool of volunteers who give their services based on their skills, interests and availability.

If you would like to join us in this work, as a full or auxiliary member, please have a word with one of the names appearing above, or telephone Pete Delamere on 07956 092975. Confidential requests for personal assistance can be made to this number, too.

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