

Ozanam News

December 2015



Society of St Vincent
de Paul Scotland



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GET INVOLVED

SUBMIT YOUR ARTICLES AND PICTURES

Thanks to all who have contributed articles and images. All contributions gratefully received. We're always looking for member profiles, updates and any interesting news from conferences. Please email submissions to communication@ssvpscotland.com

SSVP Scotland thanks everyone for their generous contributions to our second Syrian Refugee Appeal. A total amount of £60,827.79 was raised in just three months and has now been forwarded to Paris for onward distribution. This appeal is now closed.

- Pictures of SSVP Scotland annual conference courtesy of Canave Photography.

Publishing policy

1. The objective is to publish a new Ozanam News, which will be issued three times per year, Easter, Autumn and Christmas. We hope to have each latest edition posted to our new website once construction is complete for online viewing simultaneously. To facilitate this, a member of the National Council has been made responsible for its operation along with the National Office staff and a conference member with editorial experience.
2. In accordance with National Council requirements, the intention will be not to feature 'editorial' pieces. Any material deemed to detract from the Society's broader aims will be approved by the National Council prior to publication. Hopefully these arrangements will help the new Ozanam News develop into a more humorous, educational and spiritual publication which will concentrate on bringing the Society, its Members and Associates closer together. With this 'Togetherness' in mind, National Council Agenda business could well become a regular feature in the magazine. In the main, letters for publication will normally be from Twinning parties - regarded as reports. Other letters will be accepted for publication with an added footnote or returned for discussion by the respective Council and/or President if thought to be more appropriate. Details of deceased members will be included in the Obituary List, but no further Obituary/ eulogy material will be accepted.

Pray for the poor
Bishop John Keenan
celebrates mass
near a small statue
of St Vincent de
Paul. See pages 4-5

Let us go to Bethlehem

(LUKE 2:15)

National President Jim McKendrick reflects on the anticipation of the Christmas season – and the crucial opportunities to witness the joy of the child Jesus by helping those who may struggle at this time of year.

AT Christmas we delight again to hear the story of the journey to Bethlehem, the song of the angels, the surprise of the shepherds, and their joy as they find Jesus in the manger.

We must travel along with the shepherds, carrying in our hearts the angel's proclamation that today a Saviour is born for you; and like the shepherds, we should praise and glorify God.

● But lest we forget He was born to poverty; we must remember at this season all who are hungry, cold or homeless.

In our conferences too, the changing season brings us fresh challenges and opportunities. Long, dark nights and falling temperatures significantly increase the need for heating and light.

Combined with high energy costs, this can only exacerbate the fuel poverty which already affects around 647,000 (27 per cent) of households in Scotland.

During the Christmas season especially, loneliness and food/fuel poverty present us with both a challenge and an opportunity to seek out and serve the poor and needy.

This season also speaks to us of anticipation, of looking forward to new life at springtime, to a new church year, to the coming of our Saviour and the fullness of redemption.

In our conferences we are eager with anticipation – looking forward to fulfilling our vocation to serve the poor.

As Frederic our founder said: *"Charity must never look to the past, but always to the future, because the number of its past works is still very small and the present and future miseries that it must alleviate are infinite."*

● And lest we forget He became a refugee; we remember the stranger and the lonely among us.

This is also a challenging time for many people who lack the ability, confidence or motivation to venture out into the harsh weather and darkness.



Jim McKendrick is national president of the St Vincent de Paul Society in Scotland. He has been a member for nearly 40 years, having previously been president of SSVP Galloway Diocese and a member of his local conference at St John's, Stevenston.

The sick, housebound, elderly men and women and many others who have become socially isolated due to their sickness, age, infirmity or the death of spouse, friends and relatives.

As Mother Teresa said *"The poverty in the west is a different kind of poverty...it's not only a poverty of loneliness, but of spirituality."*

● Lest we forget He felt the pain of life and death; we remember now those who are ill, or anxious, or bereaved.

But lest we forget he was born to poverty; we must remember at this season all who are hungry, cold or homeless.

Christmas can be especially difficult for those who are sick, worried or grieving. Our visits, friendship and prayers can be particularly welcome and beneficial at this time.

And because we know He came for our salvation, let us in heart and mind go once again to Bethlehem, to learn the true meaning of Christmas: the birth of the child Christ.

As we endure the harshness of this season, we are joyously anticipating the advent of our Emmanuel at Christmas while looking forward to the death and resurrection, which offer us the chance of redemption and eternal life.

The changing of the seasons reminds us of God who is always present in the world and can bring *"summer out of winter"*, yet somehow transcends our understanding of the natural world. As the Jesuit poet Gerald Manley Hopkins expressed it: *"He fathers forth whose beauty is beyond change. Praise Him!"*



Annual National Meeting 2015

CELTIC Park was the venue for the 2015 annual national meeting of the Society of St Vincent de Paul, Scotland.

Bishop John Keenan celebrated mass and later gave the keynote address, titled *'Don't Forget the Poor.'*

There was an excellent presentation from members of the youth section of the SSVP while entertainment was supplied by the talented lads from Jericho House in Greenock.







Celebrate Bishop John Keenan with the founding volunteers, the Lord Lieutenant, his cadet and the scores of participants who make the club happen.

QUEEN'S AWARD FOR OZANAM CLUB

THE Ozanam Club in Paisley celebrated a top national honour from the Queen.

It received the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service – the corporate equivalent of an MBE!

The Lord-Lieutenant, on behalf of Her Majesty, presented a framed certificate and an engraved piece of ornamental glass.



Good work The Lord-Lieutenant with Alex McTavish and founding member Ann Collins.

Funny fancy dress



SOME of the costumes from Viewpark Ozanam Club's successful Halloween party. Volunteer Sandra O'Hanlon said: "A good night was had by all."

Vincentian donations boost hospice

ST Vincent's Hospice in Howwood, Renfrewshire, was established by members of the Society of St Vincent de Paul in 1988.

It has now developed into a separate charity but, in recognition of the origins and history of the hospice, the special works conference (which was established in 1983 with a view to opening a hospice) continues to this day.

The principal function of the conference is to liaise with the hospice and transfer Vincentian donations to ensure the maximum comfort for patients. None of the funds transferred can be used for salaries or medication.

In addition, the conference engages with the families of patients through the family support team at the hospice. 10 per



cent of all donations made to the hospice are directed towards this team. The services offered to young people by the team have existed in some form or other for six years. However, over the next year, the team is focusing on:

- Courageous Cubs (2 to 11 years)

- Lionhearts (12 to 18 years). The team will work with 2 to 18-year-olds, mostly before their

loved one's death, so as to prepare them for the funeral, right into the bereavement process and beyond.

This work is carried out with children, families and teachers in the home, in schools and at the hospice. The team is hoping to raise £50,000 in the course of the next year to reach out to more families who need access to its high quality services. Visit the website at www.svh.co.uk



Support Services for youngsters.

Marica Toth, former national president of SSVP Hungary, describes the work of the society in the Borsod region

THERE are more than a dozen conferences in Hungary that work in difficult circumstances, but we believe the poorest people live here, in the Borsod region in the north of the country.

People's electricity is often cut because they cannot afford to pay for it. They take water from the street and carry it great distances. They often live in small, overcrowded homes and many have no money for food.

We own a 16-year-old Ford Combi car which is necessary to collect donations and transport food. Local people in the town of Freiburg helped us to maintain the car and buy a garage tent.

We wait for incomers to the centre with

sandwiches and hot tea and, besides the practical help we provide, we listen to their sorrows, pleasures and problems.

Usually, up to 60 people come to the charity and we have 10 to 15 volunteers to serve them. We give food and buy their medicine and give them bus tickets to go to job interviews or for hospital appointments. This kind of help is the most necessary. Unfortunately, there are more needy people than we can help. We have applied for two high-performance washing machines. If we get them we will be able to operate a laundry for those who have to wash by hand.

Kind donations mean we make several hundred food packages to hand out at Christmas and Easter. The children get toys,

books and sweets. We have organised programmes for them too – such as arts and crafts workshops.

For those who need it, we provide tutoring in mathematics and Hungarian literature. We try and take great care of the neglected children, helping them with clothes and toiletries.

Our main task is the same as the SSVP in Scotland and across the world – to help and support the needy, the ill and those on the periphery of society.

We would like to thank the spiritual and financial support of the twin conferences abroad. We thank God we belong to the international family of the Society of St Vincent de Paul."

Helping in HUNGARY

"We have a Vincentian sister who is a law graduate – she gives legal advice, writes applications and interprets letters. This has helped achieve results in several cases"

"The city council of Miskolc announced we were the Civilian Organization of the Year, acknowledging our contribution to the city over the past 21 years."

"The 'Everybody Office' helps to arrange legal and official matters as many of the needy are inexperienced in dealing with such issues."

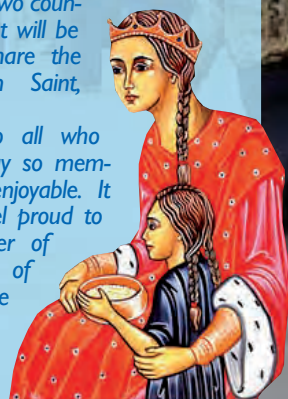
SSVP Scotland twinning officer Ian Tierney describes his trip to Miskolc.

"I WAS taken by car to where local Romani people live in small shacks, all of them dilapidated and needing repair. The car in which we travelled is owned by the SSVP and has the name of the society displayed on either side of the vehicle – an excellent way of publicising the conference!"

"I visited the local hospital where the conference do wonderful work with disabled children, many of them unable to speak, hear or walk. Funding is provided by the SSVP to purchase musical instruments for these children who are then taught to play them by members of the education staff at the hospital.

"This visit proved to be a most moving one. It proved to be a wonderful opportunity to see how our Hungarian brothers and sisters are working so hard to alleviate the problems of the poor and underprivileged and has certainly strengthened the bonds between our two countries. As most will be aware we share the same Patron Saint, Margaret.

"Thanks to all who made my stay so memorable and enjoyable. It made me feel proud to be a member of the Society of St Vincent de Paul."



Scotland and Hungary share the same patron – St Margaret. Now links between SSVP conferences in both countries is being strengthened in a bid to help the poorest of all ages, both practically and spiritually. Here, we focus on the city of Miskolc.



ST ALOYSIUS, CHAPELHALL

St Aloysius' conference said goodbye to member Kevin Lawrie as he begins his studies for the priesthood at St Mary's College in Birmingham.

He is pictured with parish priest, Fr Rooney, at a small celebration for his family and friends. Member Moira McIndoe said: "Kevin was a very helpful and enthusiastic member and we wish him every success in his studies."

ST CADOC'S, CAMBUSLANG

Members of St Cadoc's past and present came together for a final time, recently.

Former secretary Angela Carton said: "It is with great sadness we have to announce the disbandment of our conference after more than fifty years.

"After many appeals we were unable to recruit new members and most of the current members had family circumstances, making it impossible to continue." The photo was taken at its last meeting where retired members joined them to say a final goodbye.



ST STEPHEN'S, BLAIRGOWRIE

A Day of Recollection was attended by parishioners and guests from Perth Group Council. Mass was celebrated by Fr Gerry Mulligan, a Redemptorist priest who had been specially invited.

With the Year of Mercy about to start, he urged the congregation to "be compassionate, as the Father is compassionate." A Novena Mass for the Canonisation of Blessed Frederic was held in October. Eleven Conference Members attended the Mass, celebrated by their spiritual director Fr Gregory Umunna.



ST TERESA'S, DUMFRIES

Fr Jim Hayes celebrated a Mass for the sick and housebound. He anointed many elderly and sick parishioners. Parish deacon William Hiddleston gave a blessing to the carers. Following the Mass, a special lunch took place. The conference thanks everyone for making the special day "uplifting and so special."

"We saw his star rising and have come to worship him"

Matthew 2:2



OUR LADY OF LOURDES & ST BERNADETTE, LARBERT

Members and parishioners enjoyed a day of reflection at Schoenstatt, Campsie. John Sweeney, conference president, said: "The event was organised by Sister Isobel Holton of the parish conference and it was a day appreciated by all."



ST COLUMBA'S, EDINBURGH

This year's senior citizens' outing was to the border town of Galashiels.

Father Murray celebrated Mass at Our Lady and St Andrew's before a lovely lunch and a further trip to nearby Peebles.



ST JOSEPH'S, TOLLCROSS

Seventy senior citizens enjoyed an afternoon with lunch, bingo, a free raffle and dancing.

National vice-president Christine Gray said: "The music for the dancing was provided by our talented musician, William. This was a very happy occasion which was much appreciated by all who attended."

ST MARTIN OF TOURS, RENTON

St Martin of Tours' parishioners at Loch Lomond Garden Centre.



ST MARY'S, GREENOCK

St Mary's Greenock SSVP has thanked its parishioners for their generous contributions for the poor this year. The conference has helped local people with food bags and financial assistance. It donated £1,000 to a Syria appeal fund and £500 to a new drug rehabilitation unit for women in the town, run by The Jericho Society.



ST JOSEPH'S, BURNTISLAND

The Burntisland conference made its annual trip to Carfin for members and parishioners. Morrisons supermarket kindly supplied items for packed lunches for 50 members. There was a free raffle, with prizes donated by members and parishioners. Mary Lynch, conference president, said: "Everyone on the trip said they had a great day and all agreed that the packed lunch was superb!"

ST THOMAS', NEILSTON

St Thomas SSVP conference extended a warm welcome to their new parish priest Father Joe Balmer. He has recently been working in South Africa. Monsignor James Cunningham,

the former parish priest, has retired to St Charles, Paisley, and members wish him good health and happiness and thank him for his eight years of spiritual guidance.



ST ATHANASIUS', CARLUKE

Members of St Athanasius' SSVP in Carluke have said their fond farewells to Father James Naughton, wishing him all the very best for a long and happy retirement. Fr Naughton was the group's spiritual director over the last 15 years and regularly attended their weekly meetings. Eileen Logan, conference secretary, said: "He was always on hand to give spiritual and practical advice."

OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL, KILMARNOCK

The parish community organised a celebration mass for retiring parish priest Eddie McGhee. Over 200 people attended and Fr Eddie was presented with a gift from the parish along with a large cake which had the obligatory fisherman complete with rod on it – Fr Eddie is a very keen angler! A ‘going away’ night was held for member Linda Carten, treasurer for over 25 years, pictured. Frances McCann, secretary, said: “Linda worked with other

conference members in giving out food parcels and visiting the sick and housebound. We had a lovely night tinged with sadness – she will be missed and we thank God for her contribution to our conference. Not long after this a new member joined our conference – the Holy Spirit had been watching over us.”

● Top right: recently retired Father Eddie, second left, is pictured with Sr Teresa and Sr Imelda. Joining them is new parish priest Fr Martin Chambers.



ST ANDREWS & EDINBURGH DIOCESE – ANNUAL MASS

Archbishop Leo Cushley celebrated the yearly SSVP Mass for the diocese at St Kentigern's in Edinburgh. He praised members for their hard work in helping the poor in their communities. After, members and their families gathered to chat and meet the Archbishop. President Richard Steinbach said: “This was a resounding success. Thanks to Paddy Ferry and his conference for organising it.”

● Top left: Mirabelle and Maisey Meade meet Archbishop Cushley. Above right: SSVP Edinburgh & St Andrews president Richard Steinbach, Archbishop Leo Cushley and Fr Kevin Dow of St John's and St Columba's parish in Rosyth.

Richard Steinbach, president of the SSVP in St Andrews & Edinburgh gives a round-up of recent activities across the diocese.

“The caravan season was reasonably successful, with around an eighty per cent take-up. Hopefully next year we can do even better (thanks to Jimmy Harkins and the four Edinburgh conferences for their work in keeping things in order).

“We now have a new centrally heated, double-glazed caravan to replace one of the older ones and a new conference has been set up in East Calder – thanks to Theresa Canning, and all the new members for that.

“SS John & Columba's, Rosyth, held its annual Healing Mass for the sick at nearby St Peter in Chains, Inverkeithing. Both parishes welcomed new priest, and spiritual director, Father Kevin Dow.

“Many thanks to SSVP youth officer Clare Carr for hosting a Youth Day at Gillis Centre. Around 35 pupils from six schools made it a successful day.

“Since then, Andrew Gray, from Holyrood High, Edinburgh, has shown interest in starting up a school conference. Bobby Murdoch, Edinburgh Group Council president, is currently helping them set up.”

LYON FOR INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Europe Group I meeting report, Lyon, France, 13th to 15th November 2015. Attended by Clare Carr (national youth development) and Sean Murphy (conference president, University of Glasgow, pictured).

FORTY participants from 12 countries around Europe (as well as an Australian and an Argentinian!) recently attended the 2015 Europe group I meeting, held in the beautiful French city of Lyon from 13th to 15th November.

We were privileged to have members of the International Council General (CGI) at the meeting as they were attending a CGI meeting in Paris on the following Tuesday.

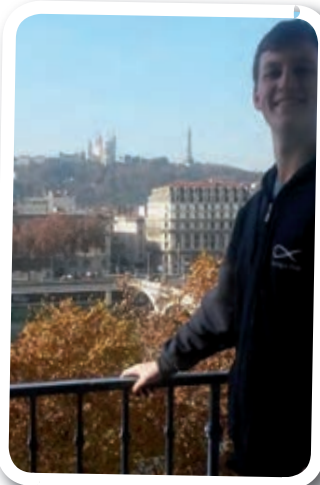
International President General Michael Thio opened the meeting, encouraging the society worldwide to follow Pope Francis's advice, to be 'innovative, courageous and audacious'. He reminded us that meekness is not weakness, but rather it is patient and forgiving.

The main topic of the weekend was communication, with group discussions being held on this topic on the Saturday.

Members of the communications team based in Paris presented their work – from their development as a team and strategy to how they are going about implementing their strategy, including standardised national training for members, how to effectively communicate with the press, creative materials for conferences to use to promote their work and social media.

Youth discussion key points

- Importance of having a communications strategy. As well as email/social media, it was thought impor-



tant that national presidents passed on information to the relevant people in their country, enabling a trickle-down of information.

Access to the internet can be an issue for people in some areas, so traditional mail is still necessary.

- Training for members is important:

- How to deliver training to new members/ school groups.
- How to effectively deliver powerful personal testimonies.
- Face-to-face or online/using print resources.

Many in the youth group felt that there were key messages about youth involvement in the society that need to be reinforced:

- Younger members need support and encouragement, not simply being told what to do.

- Young adults in particular are capable of doing everything that more senior members do.

- Youth conferences are fragile due to the nature of young people's lives (moving for university/work, for example), so sometimes need more flexibility than older, more settled members.

Recognising that we desperately want the society to be intergenerational, young people can only join conferences if it is practical to do so, meetings held on a Wednesday morning for example are generally not going to be practical for someone working or studying.

- Young people want to collaborate. Young people are trying to find a community as well as opportunities to serve.

Presentations: SSVP Austria representative Elisabeth Deutsch explained 'Vinziworks', the many projects that have been established in Austria over the last 25 years to help those in need. These projects range from tea and sandwiches for the homeless to night shelters for families, as well as projects for Roma women, which enable them to work, and a 'container village' for men who suffer from alcohol abuse.

- Awareness Month, SSVP England & Wales. Adrian Able, national president of England & Wales went into detail about their awareness month,

which developed from their seven strategic objectives – the first of these being the need to grow the membership, primarily to meet increasing need in communities.

- Refugee crisis. The National President of Austria, Erwin Dehler, provided an 'on-the-ground' perspective of the refugee crisis, as they are helping vast numbers of refugees, with 500 asylum applications being made every day, and many more people in transit through Austria.

Austria has taken in thousands of refugees – they had 60,000 up until the end of September and the number of rising.

Brian O'Reilly, SSVP general vice president and CIAD (Commission for International Aid and Development) president explored this situation further.

Brian explained that not only should the SSVP be aiding refugees in a physical manner through the giving of food and clothing, but that we also have a role in dispelling the many myths surrounding refugees caught up in this current crisis. Although it may be difficult, he explained, you have to 'grasp the nettle'!

Brian O'Reilly publicly and especially thanked SSVP Scotland for the generous donation to the Syria appeal and pointed out that we always 'punch above our weight'.

Full write-ups of the main presentations made at this meeting are available from the SSVP national office.

St Ninian's Mini Vinnies – Our Story So Far

AS the feast day of St Vincent de Paul was approaching our head teacher Mrs Purdie spoke to us about him and shared the idea of Mini Vinnies with us, appealing for volunteers to form a Mini Vinnies group at our school in Livingston.

Primary 7 organised a visit from a local SSVP representative which inspired them to do their assembly on the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and again P7 appealed for Mini Vinnies volunteers.

By this time we were very excited to have the chance to put ourselves forward to be part of such a great and well known organisation.

There was so much interest four children from each class in P3/4, P4, P5, P5/6, P6/7 and P7 were selected.

Since then we have had two Mini Vinnies conferences. We were very lucky to have the youth co-ordinator for SSVP, Clare Carr, join us for our first conference. She told us about the work the SSVP do



around Scotland and shared some of her own experiences of working with Mini Vinnies groups.

For our second conference we came together with some of our ideas and in the words of Chrissy, P7: 'put our thoughts into action'. The children at St Ninian's are so caring and always will-

ing to share their kindness and amazing smiles with other and came up with lots of ideas (see panel). We now hope to put at least one of these ideas in to action and show people in our local community that we are there to support them and make them feel happy at Christmas time.

Our ideas

- Eve, P6/7 – Make a goodie bag and take it to the hospital or elderly care home and sing Christmas carols.

- Niamh, P7 – Take Christmas presents to those less fortunate than us.

- Konstancja, P7 – Visit elderly people who don't have many visitors and just give them our time by having a chat with them.

- Taylor, P7 – Deliver Christmas cards to people in hospitals or elderly care homes.

- Chrissy, P7 – Dress up as elves and go and decorate hospitals or care homes to make people feel happy and filled with the Christmas spirit.

- Lewis, P4 – Visit elderly people and dress up in Christmassy clothes to share the Christmas spirit.

- Chloe P4 – Give presents to children this Christmas.

Global Church Making friends in Christ...India

Margaret Wallace, a member of Our Lady of Lourdes' conference in Dunfermline, reveals the links being made with their twin conferences in India and South Africa.

INDIA When we contacted our first twinning Conference in Gollapalem, India, we receive a warm and detailed reply. They told us of the work they do in the name of St Vincent de Paul. With ten members and five adopted families, they provide monthly food supplies, support the education of their adopted families and attend to them when in hospital.

We sent photographs of our conference and celebrations of our 50th Anniversary and we were rewarded with photos of their own conference and celebrations!

This included their St Vincent de Paul Festival and Christmas and Easter celebrations. Some of the Society members with their

adopted families and their priest are in the photo outside the Carmel Matha Church, Phirangipuram. We contacted them during the deadly heatwave in India in May, which took so many lives, to remind them they were in our thoughts and prayers.

SOUTH AFRICA Brothers and sisters in our second twinning conference in Johannesburg replied to our initial letter and we are delighted to begin building links with them. The support they are giving to their parishioners includes care of the poor and assisting those who need their help, including home decorating.

We are looking forward to future correspondence with them. It is humbling and uplifting to receive news from our twinning conferences, their letters and photos are placed on the SSVP notice board in the Church to 'Share the Love'.



Loneliness: the Western disease

"The greatest disease in the West today is not TB or leprosy; it is being unwanted, unloved, and uncared for. We can cure physical diseases with medicine, but the only cure for loneliness, despair, and hopelessness is love."

- Mother Teresa

"Loneliness is as damaging to Scots' health as poverty or poor housing."

-Scottish Parliament report, October 2015

What is loneliness?

As social beings, most of us feel the need for rewarding social contact and relationships. One common definition of loneliness is that it is the feeling we get when our need for this type of contact is not met. However, loneliness is not the same as being alone. Some people might choose to be alone and live happily without much contact with other people. Or again, some may have lots of social contact or be in a relationship or part of a family and still feel lonely.

Loneliness and social isolation in Scotland

- 17% of older people are in contact with family, friends and neighbours less than once a week and 11% are in contact less than once a month.
- Over half (51%) of all people aged 75 and over live alone.
- Two fifths all older people say the television is their main company.
- 63% of adults aged 52 or over who have been widowed, and 51% of the same group who are separated or divorced report, feeling lonely some of the time or often.
- 59% of adults aged over 52 who report poor health say they feel lonely some of the time or often, compared to 21% who say they are in excellent health.

The impact on health

Research shows that loneliness and social isolation are harmful to our health: lacking social connections is a comparable risk factor for early death as smoking 15 cigarettes a day, and may be worse for us than well-known risk factors such as obesity and physical inactivity. A recent Scottish Parliament report said: "Loneliness is as damaging to Scots' health as poverty or poor housing."

What can we do?

- Fulfil our Vincentian vocation by visiting and befriending those who are lonely, isolated and in need. Take the time to understand their true needs. Ozanam and La Taillandier soon discovered that the old man in the garret did not really need their material help. What he longed for was their time; their friendship and their companionship. Thus he felt valued and respected as an individual.
- Raise our awareness of those in our community who are sick, housebound, live alone or new to the neighbourhood and consider how we can befriend them, help them and make them feel useful and valued.

Drop in on the sick and housebound for a friendly chat, visit those new to the parish and welcome them, offering practical help and advice.

- Promote social inclusion and community enrichment by our charitable works.

Encourage and support attendance at Masses for the Sick. Lunch clubs provide an opportunity to get out of the house and enjoy a warm meal among friends.

Coffee mornings/afternoons allow people to get together, have a chat and some fun.

Intergenerational events such as meals, concerts and social events/outings allow young people to plan and provide events which recognise and celebrate the achievements of older people. Such activities enrich both the young and old.

By Jim McKendrick

A VIBRANT 2015 St Simon's, Partick

Mark Henry picks out some of the highlights from the past 12 months...

We were sad to see Father Stuart Reynolds and Father John McGrory leave for pastures new.

We were delighted to welcome Canon Peter McBride to St Simon's. Canon McBride will divide his time between St Peter's and St Simon's.

The Simon Cafe continues to go from strength to strength. We were delighted to welcome new volunteers and are very grateful to them. The parishioners of St Simon's very generously donated large amounts of clothing for the Frederick Ozanam Centre in Glasgow. We were overwhelmed by their generosity and kindness.

There was the annual bus run to Largs. It is always one of the highlights in the calendar year.

When you have such a close community like St Simon's, it makes us all feel truly blessed. We would like to thank the parishioners of St Simon's and our volunteers for all your wonderful support. We could not do it without you.

'The SSVP provide vital support'

"St Simon's has been my home parish for nearly 20 years. It has always been a fluid but close-knit community, where newcomers are welcomed and, if possible, given some parish responsibility. The parish's St Vincent de Paul Society is extremely active, taking its social justice mission seriously and, when required, the parish community mobilises quickly to support. Whether it's a collection of clothes, additional volunteers for running the cafe or a simple plea



for funds, the response is generous. As austerity bites, the job that the SSVP is doing is ever more important and parish support is vital."

- Carol Monaghan, MP for Glasgow North West and St Simon's parishioner

Margaret Connelly – SSVP member who helped AIDS orphans in South Africa.

MARGARET died suddenly but peacefully after a short illness.

She is the daughter of the late John and Ellen Urquhart of Cardenden, Fife. She is survived by her husband John and three children – Stephen, Mark and Frances.

Margaret was educated at St Columba's RC High School in Cowdenbeath and obtained her primary school teaching diploma at Craiglockhart Teacher Training College.

She lived in Canada with her family for five years before returning to Scotland in 1967.

She taught at St Marie's and St Paul's and then in Newport before emigrating to South Africa, where John took up a post in manufacturing.

There, she worked for the local library service and became an active member of the St Vincent de Paul committee at St Dominic's Catholic Church in Hillcrest, to the west of Durban. Margaret

took part in all the society's activities and it was her job to organise street collections twice annually.

She retired from the municipal library in 2003 after 20 years' service. In 2004, she began assisting an American volunteer who came to South Africa as a lay missionary, helping AIDS orphans. The focus of the work

was providing drop-in centres for children, along with books and recreational materials, along with food and clothing.

Margaret came into her own as a librarian, cataloguing almost 20,000 books that were collected over several years. True to form, she was working on the accessions just two days before her death.

She was a well-known but unassuming presence in both the church and in the wider community of Hillcrest. She is sadly missed by all who knew her. Margaret Connelly 1938-2014.



† OBITUARIES †

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord. Let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace. Amen

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|------------------------|---|
| ● JOHN McMULLEN | FORMER SECRETARY, ST PATRICK'S, COATBRIDGE |
| ● GEORGE WALKER | FORMER PRESIDENT, HOLY NAME, OAKLEY |
| ● WILLIE MULLEN | FORMER MEMBER, ST BERNADETTE'S, MOTHERWELL |
| ● BUNTY REILLY | FORMER TREASURER, ST NINIAN'S, DUNDEE |
| ● CANON JAMES FOLEY | SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR, ST AUGUSTINE'S, COATBRIDGE |
| ● CATHERINE KHAN | SECRETARY, CHRIST THE KING, PITTENWEEM |
| ● THOMAS GARRITY | FORMER TREASURER, OUR LADY OF THE WAYSIDE, BRIDGEGATE/ST CONVAL'S POLLOCK |
| ● JOHN GALBRAITH | FORMER MEMBER, ST CATHERINE LABOURE, BALORNOCK |
| ● HUGH IRVINE | FORMER MEMBER, ST COLUMBA'S, RENFREW |
| ● DANNY HEANEY | ACTIVE MEMBER, ST JOHN'S, PORT GLASGOW |
| ● JOHN FARRELL | FORMER MEMBER, OUR LADY MOTHER OF THE CHURCH, CURRIE |
| ● PATRICIA FARRELL | FORMER MEMBER, OUR LADY MOTHER OF THE CHURCH, CURRIE |
| ● ANNE MARIE O'DONNELL | PRESIDENT, ST MARGARET'S, AIRDRIE |
| ● MICHAEL CALLAGHAN | CONF FOUNDER MEMBER, ST LEONARD'S, EAST KILBRIDE |
| ● CATRIONA MCALLISTER | ACTIVE MEMBER, ST BRIGID'S, KILBIRNIE |

Tanya

The honest face of poverty and migration...

A visit to the Ozanam Centre in Glasgow was an eye-opener for **Kiera Elliot**. The teenager, a pupil at Trinity High School in Rutherglen, wrote this article, both poignant and uplifting, based on her experience.

CRACKS. Look around you. In pavements and in walls, there are cracks.

All around us there are cracks; homeless people are like these cracks. We are not blind to see them but we often choose to ignore them. We step around the cracks and soon enough there are too many and we can't fix them all. Some people try to repair the cracks, but to fix them more help is needed.

I never thought much about homelessness and immigration before my visit to the Ozanam Centre but it has now left an indelible impression on me.

My experience with an elderly woman named Tanya* opened my eyes to the truth about immigration in connection to poverty. I began to imagine what it must be like for her and others who had no place to call home and how she must have felt – helpless. A number of homeless people in Scotland are immigrants. They have come to live here in hope of a better life but their dreams do not come true. Instead they live on the

streets. I was going to see for myself the true extent of poverty and homelessness by helping those in need.

SCARED. I looked out the window as the sky shed a thousand tears, waiting until I came face to face with what I deemed frightening. As the bus drove past the centre I saw what looked like a never-ending line of woman and children, hand-in-hand. Children? I did not think about the children in need.

As the centre door opened I braced myself. My eyes searched around the waiting room, looking at the empty chairs and wondering how all of the women would fit into this tiny room. The white paint was chipping off the walls and the coarse blue carpet looked worse for wear. I began trudging through the centre until I entered a narrow, dimly-lit hallway that had six small changing stalls.

On the walls there were posters that had unfamiliar words translated into English. Clothes sprung from

every corner, a rainbow of colours and sizes, all different and unique.

The centre door opened and I heard the stomping of many feet, the wailing of children and the of foreign languages. I was thrown in the deep end. Shocked. "Six to come in!" a volunteer shouted. Then almost as quickly as she said it, six women appeared.

Before me sat an elderly lady, her name was Tanya. She had coffee-coloured skin, her face was creased with experience and she held a look of knowledge. Her back was hunched as if she carried the weight of the world upon her shoulders, her hair was white and thin as thread.

Her eyes looked tired, sad and faded as if she witnessed too much pain but yet she still smiled, even though it was clear that she had experienced much hardship in her life. She was wearing a worn out t-shirt, a dull threadbare skirt and sandals. I was stunned; her clothing was unsuitable for the winter months, she would be freezing.

This woman had barely anything, nothing to keep her warm at night and only sandals to protect her from the cold, while many of us are very materialistic as we have countless pairs of shoes. Should Tanya have not received help because she was

immigrant? No, she deserves help just as much as you and I would. By meeting Tanya, it led me to think differently about immigration and homelessness, I know now that anyone can become homeless and has made me more thankful.

DETERMINED. I searched through the mountain of donated clothes; I was determined to help Tanya. I was on a mission; I found a warm wool jacket, long trousers, thermal socks, a jumper and underwear.

I made my way back to Tanya. As I handed her the clothes her eyes shone with happiness, she looked as if I had

Her clothing was unsuitable for the winter months, she would be freezing.

given her the sun. She held up the clothes and her eyes started to water. She looked at me and said in a very strong accent "Thank you! Thank you! God bless you."

She closed the curtain before revealing herself in her new clothes, radiating with



glee. Tanya embraced me in a hug. As I watched her leave I saw Tanya's daughter, who was also homeless, look at her mother as if she was her guardian angel and watched as they exchanged a warm, emotional hug. I realised that we take for granted the possessions we have. I was astounded that Tanya was so thankful for the clothes she received.

I have discovered that although she had been through a lot, she had people who loved her and who supported each other. It has taught me to treasure my family, just like Tanya does.

From my experience at the Ozanam Centre I have become more thankful for the items I have.

EMPATHY. My visit to the Ozanam Centre encouraged me to help others more and I have continued to help out at the centre. It gave me a fresh perspective; I have learned through my own personal experience that poverty is a real issue.

Through Tanya, I have learned to appreciate the items I have and to take more care of them. This experience has taught me not be judgemental of people due to their personal circumstances.

We need to remember that they have a family they need to support, children they need to feed and clothe and parents like Tanya who have nothing and are overjoyed by just a little kindness. Just think of this and the next time you walk past a homeless person on the street don't ignore them, show them a little kindness.

Don't step around the crack.

*Name changed to protect identity.

Giving St Vincent de Paul shares bread with a poor man. His Christ-like love of the poor is the driving force behind the society and places like the Ozanam Centre in Glasgow.

Me and the St Vincent de Paul Society

What's involved in being a member of the Society of St Vincent de Paul? Two members reflect on their involvement and what the society means to them.

Bridie Burns reflects on her 26 years as a member of the SSVP conference at Our Lady of Lourdes in Dunfermline.

I WAS invited to join the SSVP twenty six years ago. At that point my knowledge of the society was limited to a group of men holding boxes at the back of the church following Sunday Mass, the takings being distributed to the poor and the needy.

Over the years I have come to realise that it is not just financial poverty that some people suffer from, but the poverty of loneliness particularly with the loss of the extended family.

These days, many families can move quite a distance from their parents, which means as parents become older and frailer, it is difficult for families to help them.

I have experienced many elderly people who really appreciate and look forward to a visit from the SSVP.

Very often, my faith has been strengthened, especially on cold win-

ter evenings when I have not been looking forward to going out to visit, when the people I have visited have inspired me with their faith and resilience.

This I have found very humbling. I find that bringing Holy Communion to the sick and housebound is a great privilege.

There have been times when I have brought the blessed sacrament to someone who has been close to death and not communicating but when they see the host, their eyes light up and I am filled with awe at the work of the Holy Spirit.

Many Vincentian Brothers and Sisters have inspired me over the years. The conference meetings are a great support, where problems and ideas are shared and where the conference prayers help recharge my batteries – thus enabling me to carry on with the work of the SSVP.

Christopher Simpson, a conference member of St Mary's Our Lady Star of the Sea in Saltcoats, says his experience as a member of the SSVP has helped inspire his vocation in social care.

ALTHOUGH our conference meet once a week, being a member is a daily commitment.

Jesus said: 'Do not be afraid' and we should not be afraid to go out and seek those less fortunate or those in trouble to help them.

People may need us simply to give them advice, signpost them in the right direction, or just comfort them for a while.

I am thankful for the leadership Frederic showed us, and along with my fellow brothers and sisters, I pray that he becomes a saint one day. My experience as a member has led me to my vocation in social care and if we can all help at least one person a week then we will continue Frederic's legacy.

A quote often attributed to Mother Teresa neatly sums up what SSVP members try to achieve: "We can do no great things, only small things with great love."

"I have brought the blessed sacrament to someone who has been close to death ... when they see the host, their eyes light up and I am filled with awe at the work of the Holy Spirit"



"It is only for your love alone that the poor will forgive you the bread you give to them."

St. Vincent de Paul