



St Vincent  
de Paul Society

England and Wales

Turning Concern into Action

# The Wirral Vincentian

January/February 2023

Hello all,

Welcome to our December 2022 newsletter. I always ask myself, at the start of a new year, how long into January is it still OK to be saying 'Happy New Year' to people!

As this is our first newsletter of 2023, I felt it's still OK... so Happy New Year to you and yours! I hope 2023 is a year full of joy, peace, hope and happiness for you.

Going forward the newsletter will be on a quarterly, rather than monthly, basis.

December was a busy month at the Centre. Our Christmas events were a huge success, and all were well attended, alongside our usual services. We couldn't have achieved all that we did without the amazing support of our volunteers, partner teams such as Wirral Foodbank and Citizens Advice, and our Conference, LOG and Parish colleagues. *We Thank You all so much!*

A special 'thank you' to Rose Mullarkey and Iona Watterson, who supported us during the planning stages of our Christmas activities and whose knowledge and experience proved vital to helping us achieve all that we did!

This was my first Christmas as Centre Manager and the generosity of local organisations and individuals through gifts and money that were donated, was quite overwhelming! Most days during December I would find another parcel of toys, selections boxes, chocolates.

Our Christmas Grotto was a massive success, and all the children were so happy to meet Santa and tell him what they were hoping for at Christmas. They enjoyed some snacks, juice, and colouring in, whilst their parents were able to have a cup of tea, chat to other parents and learn more about the Centre.

We gave **146 presents and selection boxes** through the grotto! We are so thankful to all those that supported us with the Grotto, a special mention to Rose Mullarkey, who through her contacts supported us with most of the grotto toys. **An amazing act of kindness!**

For Christmas, we also gave gift hampers to those in our community who were struggling. We supported many individuals and families through the hampers, **20 adults 42 children**. We worked with Change Grow Live "Wirral Ways to Recovery" and were greatly supported by donations from the community and SVP Conferences and Parishes. Each hamper included pyjamas, a hat, chocolates, biscuits and a bath and body gift set. All those who received a hamper were very thankful.

A special 'thank you' to Canon Phil Moor, Mick Brown and the parishioners at Holy Apostles and Martyrs for their wonderful donation of **97 brand new pairs of pyjamas!**

We hosted a Christmas party at the Centre on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> December which was well attended. It was great to meet more Conference members and partners, as well as seeing so many familiar faces again. We also had our raffle that included some great prizes kindly organised by Nicola, who joins us at the Centre from Citizen's Advice supporting Foodbank clients. Some prizes included Penhaligon's perfume, Monster Truck Live tickets, a knitted Nativity set and a Nespresso Coffee Machine. Our raffle at the Christmas Party raised **£272**, thank you to all those that participated!

The Little Theatre Birkenhead held our Christmas Panto, which was Humpty Dumpty The Eggs Factor. In the intermission we held a small raffle. Altogether, we raised **£205** from the sale of panto tickets and the raffle. We hope that all those who joined us for the panto had a great time.

As we reflect on the year that has passed, we can't help but think of all the people supported through the centre. During December we saw a **70.88% increase** in the number of beneficiaries the Centre supported, a total of **1282 beneficiaries**. We have loved being able to help this many people in our community who were struggling at Christmas.

A part of the reason why the Centre helps so many community members is due to the unwavering commitment of our service partners. **Wirral Foodbank** have continued to provide thousands of people with not just food, but with support and advice through their Foodbank Plus Project (delivered by Citizens Advice). Through the Foodbank we have welcomed more services in the Centre in 2022, such as **Wirral Mind** and **Energy Projects Plus (EPP)**. We have found that these extra services have helped those coming through our door.

In addition to **Foodbank Plus Project**, **Citizen's Advice Wirral (CAB)** started a weekly drop-in session at the Centre in 2022, which will continue in 2023. This service has been a massive benefit to the community, especially those that require face to face help. Alongside Citizen's Advice, **Liverpool John Moore's University Legal Advice Centre** started a clinic at the Centre in 2022. They have provided beneficiaries with free legal advice and have been accepting email referrals from the Centre. This service has been well accessed.

**Change Grow Live (CGL) "Wirral Ways to Recovery"** have continued to run some of their group sessions at the Centre. We have seen many of their clients access the wider services at the Centre and even donate to us. We love seeing the difference that "Wirral Ways to Recovery" make to the individuals that attend. The partnership we have with CGL has provided staff and volunteers with the amazing opportunity to get naloxone training in 2022 and learn more about how we can help those in our community struggling with addiction and substance misuse.

**Brian from ReachOut Northwest** has continued to drop in every month to speak to clients needing advice and support to get back into work. They also work with many specialised partners, such as Wirral Change, to help out of work individuals overcome barriers to employment.

**Julie and John, Community Connectors** from Involve Northwest, also drop in to speak to beneficiaries and help their current clients access services here. Brian, Julie and John have been great supporters of the Centre, through informing community members about us, the services we offer and the work we do here.

Over the next year we hope to make the services at the Centre even better. We want to continue supporting our community through the winter months via our **Warm Hubs**, working in partnership with several Parishes and develop our activities that support all ages.

We want to continue providing activities, to the community and help those who are feeling isolated. A long-term goal for the centre is redeveloping the structure of the building. Our plan is to create an open plan café area with integrated reception; redesign the clothes bank and to have a fully functioning kitchen. On top of that, we want to develop our online sales and redesign the upstairs activity room to make the space more versatile. All these changes will mean we can provide a better service and environment for our beneficiaries, as well as extend our reach to more members of our communities.

We hope to see many of you during the year and would love more of you to join in the work we do at the Centre or get involved in the activities.

If you want to come and visit and see more of what we do here, please call and let us know. We are always thrilled to have new visitors to show around.

If anyone is interested in our volunteering opportunities, please do not hesitate to contact the Centre for more information.

We are so thankful to everyone who supports us and the Centre by volunteering, donating or just getting the word out about what we do.

Warmest wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeanette". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a small dot at the end.

# John's Fred Talk

By John Ellison

Driverless cars and devices that respond to any spoken instruction! Rockets circling the earth and proposed day-trips to the moon and Mars in the near future! All of the dreams of the science fiction magazines of the last century coming to fruition? Yet alongside these new chapters in human history there need to be interspersed the accounts of hunger and homelessness in even the most prosperous countries of the world. Those who are familiar with the life of Frederic Ozanam may be aware of his visit to England to see the newly constructed Crystal Palace in Hyde Park. This was in 1851 when the site hosted an international exhibition celebrating modern industry and civilisation. Ozanam was dismayed though to see the same extremes of poverty in London as those he was familiar with in Paris. Ozanam along with a significant number of other Catholic thinkers was aware of the dual-edged nature of progress. Advances in building materials and techniques have obviously been of benefit to millions over the last century but while a coldness of heart is allowed to exist in political structures poverty and homelessness will continue to impact individuals and families.



I have just finished reading again the biography of Henri Perrin, 'Priest and Worker'. In the book, there is a description of the remarkable role played by Perrin in his role as a worker-priest during a long and bitter strike in constructing what was then the largest tunnel in Europe. This occurred in France in 1952 but the parallels with the way the mega-structures were built for the World Cup in Qatar are instructive. Here are a few passages from a statement sent to the press by Father Perrin in his role as one of the members of the strike committee...

The conditions of work and accommodation, of hygiene and safety are inadequate and unfit for human beings. Because the management fails to fulfil its commitments, or hoodwinks its employees with promises that never materialise... Harshness of the work, day and night, in water, dust, gas and heat... Five men have died as a result of accidents in less than a year.

Although the worker-priests were not connected to the Vincentian religious family you would guess that Ozanam would have understood their focused mission of solidarity with the poor. The movement only lasted a few decades before having official approval removed by the church. A worker-priest would simply go on various placements as an ordinary worker in factories without the knowledge of the employers or their fellow employees. What is quite touching is the way the academic and intellectual skills of Perrin are used to meet the needs of the various situations as they arose:

After I had spoken two or three times on matters of procedure, I found myself elected to the strike committee, and for the last three days I've been acting as its typist...I've managed to avoid joining in the discussions with the management for many reasons. What is so exciting, and so moving, is the sudden trust that has suddenly come into the eyes of my workmates.

This is a really fascinating book and if anyone can find second-hand copies on Amazon I would recommend they do purchase it. Its full title is, '*Priest and Worker. The Autobiography of Henri Perrin.*' Translated and with an Introduction by Bernard Wall. (Published Macmillan, London, 1965.)

# Case Study

Three brothers attended the Centre at the start of December, initially to receive help from the Foodbank. After receiving their food, they joined the team in the Community Café where we shared information with them about all the Centre's services and activities. A couple of days later, they joined us again, this time being supported by Clothes Bank and receiving advice and support from Energy Projects Plus.

Since then, they have been regular visitors, dropping in a few times each week and they all received a Christmas Hamper from us, which they really appreciated. They informed us that they are regular visitors to The Meeting Place, a Christian Meeting Centre located nearby. They linked us with the local Pastor. We have since met him and agreed to do some joint working with them on their allotments.

The brothers have all offered to do any handy work or painting that we may need in the Centre once our renovations are complete.

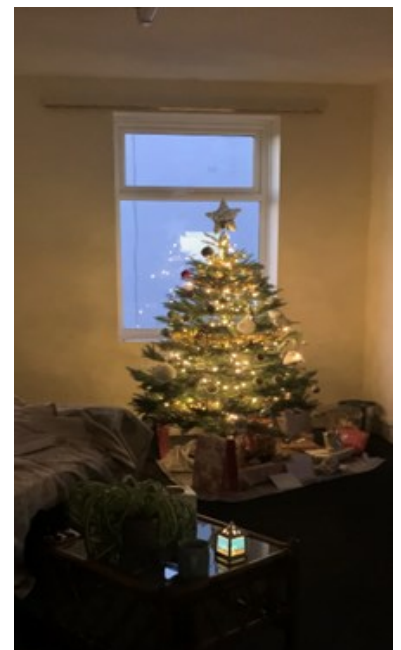
## **Client quotes**

**"Absolutely amazing! Received hampers too, so grateful. Thank you."**

**"Very friendly and easily accessible."**

**"Relieves loneliness."**

**"Very pleased to get clothes for the kids."**



# Weekly Timetable

## Monday

### **Coffee and Cake Club**

11am to 12:30pm

### **Clothes Bank**

11am to 12:30pm

### **Foodbank**

12:30pm to 3pm

## Wednesday

### **YMCA Only Session**

11am to 12:30pm

### **Foodbank**

12:30pm to 3pm

### **Energy Projects Plus**

1pm to 3pm

## Friday

### **Clothes Bank**

11am to 12:30pm

### **Foodbank**

12:30pm to 3pm

### **Citizen's Advice**

12pm to 3pm

## Tuesday

### **Vinnie's Pantry**

1pm to 3pm

### **Foodbank**

12:30pm to 3pm

### **Energy Projects Plus**

1pm to 3pm

## Thursday

### **Coffee and Cake Morning**

11am to 12:30pm

### **Clothes Bank**

11am to 12:30pm

### **Foodbank**

12:30pm to 3pm

### **Energy Projects Plus**

1pm to 3pm

# Cook with Philly

## **Minestrone Soup**

### **Ingredients**

- 1 Tablespoon Olive Oil
- 1 Onion (Chopped)
- 2 Carrots (Peeled and Diced)
- 2 Large Celery Sticks (Diced)
- 2 Tablespoons Tomato Puree
- 2 Cloves of Garlic (Crushed)
- 400g tin of Chopped Tomatoes
- 2 Pints of Vegetable Stock (Cubes)
- 1 Tin of Cannellini Beans (Drained and Rinsed)
- 100g Dried Spaghetti (Broken Up)
- Salt and Pepper



### **Method**

1. Add all vegetable ingredients to oil in a large pan.
2. Season with salt and pepper.
3. Sauté for several minutes.
4. Add garlic, tinned tomatoes, tomato puree and vegetable stock. Cook for 5-10 minutes.
5. Add broken up spaghetti and cook until the spaghetti is soft.
6. Add cannellini beans.

To serve I grate parmesan cheese over. Yum! The soup can last for several days or can be frozen in portions.

TIP: If the soup is too thick, add more water.