

## **St Anne's Westby SVP Conference**

### **What is the SVP ?**

The **St Vincent de Paul Society**, also known as the SVP, is a voluntary Christian organisation, founded in Paris in 1833 by Blessed Frederic Ozanam and a group of young Christian lay people.

It aims to provide support and help to disadvantaged and marginalised people through person-to-person contact. The SVP offers help to anyone in need regardless of creed, age, gender or ethnic and social background. The Society is active in 137 countries around the world and has over 700,000 volunteer members, both men and women, young and old.

The SVP Society of England and Wales has its headquarters in London and there are Central Councils, District Councils and Conferences. Full details can be found on the SVP website at [www. http://svp.org.uk/](http://svp.org.uk/).

**St Anne's Westby SVP Conference** was formed in 2009 and now has members from the parish of The Holy Cross as well as St Anne's. The conference is part of the South Fylde District Council and thence the Lancaster Central Council.

The mission of the Conference is that of the SVP Society which is to help in any way possible people who are in need be it due to health, social or financial issues.

On a regular basis we visit members of the community including several of our older parishioners who now cannot get to church due to infirmity or poor health, those recently bereaved and others who have been referred to us by the Parish Priests or Prison Chaplain. Over the years we have made hundreds of visits and it is very satisfying to be able to spend some time with these important people who may well be alone and not see anyone between our visits.

As a result of our very generous congregations we have been able to fund numerous projects including; Higher Education for Indian Students, town visits for offenders working towards parole, uniforms for primary school students, holidays for disadvantaged children, Sudan baby feeding programme, St Cuthbert's Drop-In Centre in Blackpool, all in addition to donating to several National SVP Disaster Fund appeals.

On a practical note and again thanks to generous donations we have supplied food parcels to ex-offenders families each Christmas, see separate article, and now we are supporting the Fylde Foodbank with a donation box at each church.

## **How could you help?**

### **Practical help**

Sadly over the past couple of years we have lost some of our members due to serious illness or passing away and we are now finding it difficult to meet our commitments and so if you would like to join us and become a member you would get a very warm welcome. Any time you can give us would be much appreciated by the people you visit so don't think pressured to commit to many hours a week. If you think you might like to join but would like some more detail about the involvement then please let us know by e-mail as below and someone will come and have a chat with you.

### **Financial help**

If you cannot afford some time but would like to turn your concern into action then perhaps you might consider becoming an SVP Friend. For as little as £2 per month\* you can become a Friend to the ignored and forgotten. Your support will help the SVP carry on its vital work and reach out to more people in need. In return you will get regular updates on our work and an opportunity to attend some of our fundraising events as a special guest. To become an SVP Friend please e-mail [info@svp.ork.uk](mailto:info@svp.ork.uk).

### **Conference contact;**

If you would like to contact a member of our conference please e-mail a message to [stannwestby@gmail.com](mailto:stannwestby@gmail.com) and include 'SVP' in the subject line and we will respond as soon as possible.

### **Conference meeting dates;**

The St Anne's Westby SVP Conference has regular meetings, usually the second and fourth Thursdays of the month in the Sherburn Room at The Willows however please check the meeting dates published in the Church Bulletins.

### **Current projects**

**Fylde Foodbank** – After Christmas at all three churches we will continue to collect food donated towards the Fylde Foodbank. A list of suitable food items is on display at each church.

### **An example of our practical work.**

For many years we have worked with the **Assisted Community Engagement (ACE Project)**, which is part of Caritas Care. It provides a range of community services to support people released from prison and we have taken food parcels each Christmas to support ex-offenders, their families and the homeless at Christmas, and beyond.

Last Christmas, when SVP members were delivering parcels to the ACE offices, they were pleased to meet Nigel, who received one of the SVP Christmas parcels. About the same time,



Nigel also found accommodation with the help of the Ace Team. The Garstang SVP Conference helped Nigel to equip his newly acquired flat with pots and pans and bedding. The regular support of the Ace Team and SVP has had a profound effect on Nigel's life. Writing about his experience, Nigel says that he had completed an apprenticeship in a garage and life seemed good until he got into a fight one night in town and received 30 months youth custody. It was in prison that he started a drug habit, which trapped him in a twenty year cycle of crime, prison sentences and homelessness until he found the support he desperately needed from the Ace

Project. With their support he has completely turned his life around and now, full of gratitude, he has hope for his future. Nigel is just one of the people touched by your generous support of the SVP.