

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, lacking clothes and you clothed me, sick and you visited me,

in prison and you came to see me.

Matthew 25: 35-36

St Vincent de Paul Society (England and Wales)

Issue 31 • Spring 2021

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.”

Fr Paul's Easter Sunday Mass for prisoners

In his filmed Easter Sunday Mass for prisoners (please see link aside), SVP Working with Prisons Spiritual Advisor Fr Paul Shaw re-emphasised the message of 2 Corinthians 5:17, when he spoke of God's unconditional love and forgiveness, and of the Easter message of new life.

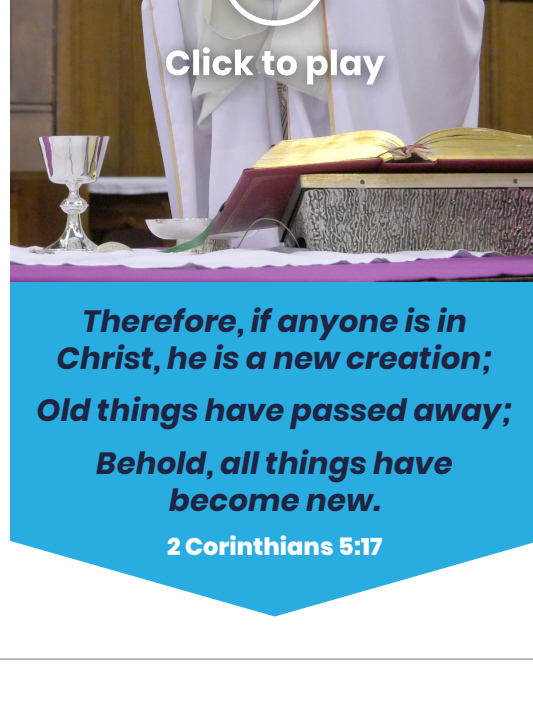
“Whatever the past may have held – some bad choices, some mistakes, some hurt, some wounds – today is the day of new beginnings.” he said.

Fr Paul's Mass complemented the Easter Vigil / Easter Saturday Mass celebrated by National Catholic Chaplain for Prisons, Canon Paul Douthwaite, which was also filmed and disseminated to selected prisons. Together the films underline the commitment of the Church and charitable organisations like SVP to prisons and prisoners, to help and support them in working to break the cycle of reoffending.

As a regular Mass celebrant at HMP Berwyn near Wrexham in North Wales, Fr Paul's services and homilies to prisoners often highlight that they are able to put the past behind them if they really want to; that tomorrow really can be a whole new beginning.

“All of us are in need of God's mercy; no them and us, no, only all of us. So let us ask for that mercy, knowing that it is there for the asking.”

Fr Paul Shaw werburgh465@btinternet.com



Click to play

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; Old things have passed away; Behold, all things have become new.

2 Corinthians 5:17



We need a Treasurer

As the work of the SVP Working with Prisons group expands and develops and we increase the task of fundraising and the distribution of resources to Conferences around the UK, it will become necessary for us to properly account for our income and expenditure, and to submit Returns and other documents to National Office, in the usual ways.

We are therefore making a plea in this newsletter for a 'Treasurer', to join Prisons Lead Ian Kempson, Secretary Kevin McKenna and the steering group, to support us in keeping our financial affairs in good order. We haven't got any money as yet but we're making the plea early so that the person can set-up their own processes and procedures from the very outset.

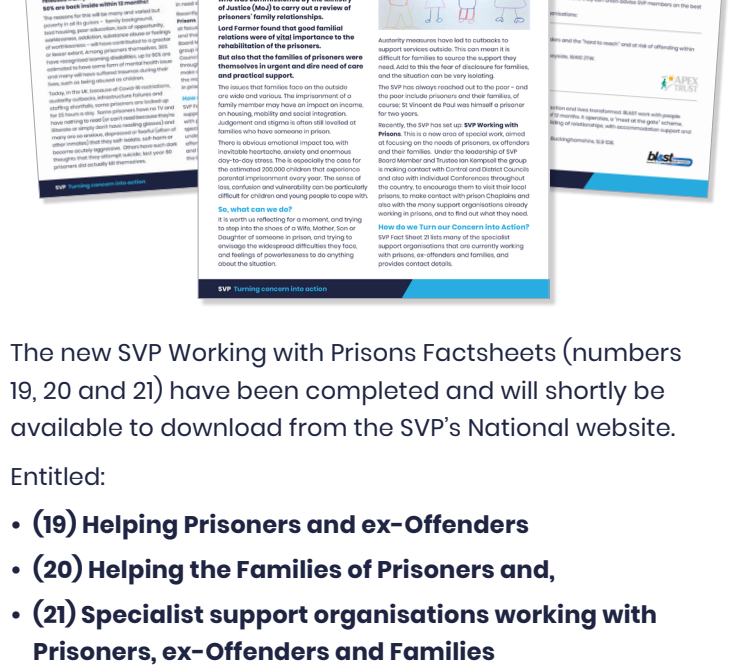
We don't envisage the role being especially onerous or time-consuming, but obviously it's an important one and vital if we are to move SVP Working with Prisons forward in a professional way.

Can you help us? If so, please contact:

Kevin McKenna kevin.mckenna70@ntlworld.com

Factsheets now available

Useful information for interested Conferences and Members



The new SVP Working with Prisons Factsheets (numbers 19, 20 and 21) have been completed and will shortly be available to download from the SVP's National website.

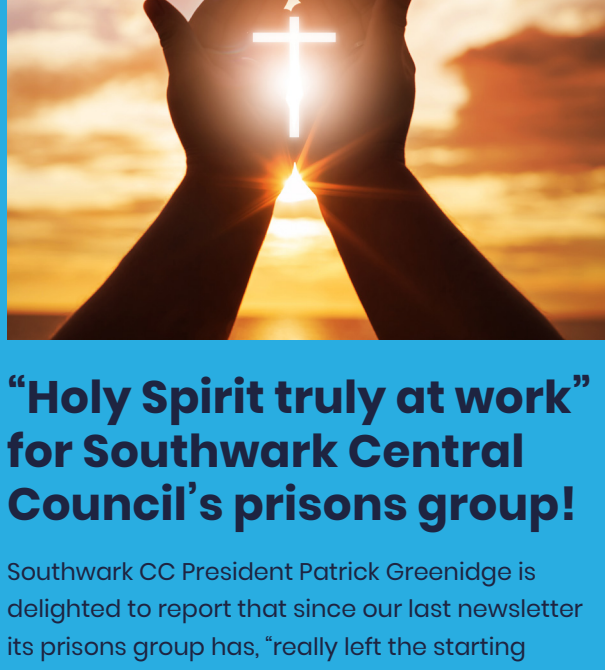
Entitled:

- **(19) Helping Prisoners and ex-Offenders**
- **(20) Helping the Families of Prisoners and,**
- **(21) Specialist support organisations working with Prisoners, ex-Offenders and Families**

The three factsheets are intended to provide interested Conferences and Members with some introductory information about how the 'Society's newest 'Special Work' has been set-up to extend SVP's visiting and befriending work to include prisons, prisoners and their families, throughout England and Wales. There are over 80,000 men and women currently locked up in the 117 prisons – a huge number of people, all blighted by poverty of one form or another, and all in real need of our support!

One of SVP's maxims is that, 'Spending time with people is our greatest gift'. Befriending is the unique and special service that we are able to provide to our fellow man, so these new factsheets will help to detail how we can best achieve this in prisons, as well as connecting the men and women inside to the many specialist support organisations that have a clear understanding of exactly what prisoners, ex-offenders and families need, when they are released.

As our work in prisons develops we expect that there will be a corollary in working with homeless people, as indeed Tony Blackburne and his wife Dr Jean Sutton are doing with their Conference, St Francis HMP Hindley, and in St Helens. We are therefore working on a projected Factsheet number 22, to provide information about this area of activity.



“Holy Spirit truly at work” for Southwark Central Council's prisons group!

Southwark CC President Patrick Greenidge is delighted to report that since our last newsletter its prisons group has, "really left the starting blocks" in its work to develop new links and to provide targeted relief work for local prisoners in need. Contact has been established with three new prison Chaplaincies, at HMP Isle of Sheppey, at HMP Rochester and at HMP Thamesmead and Bibles, word puzzles and reading glasses have been provided to them by local Conferences.

However, Patrick said that it was in Woolwich where clear evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit was most visible. Following numerous unsuccessful attempts to obtain HMP Thamesmead (Anglican) Chaplain's name, Patrick was finally able to obtain it, only to find that the individual was a long-standing member of Patrick's Golf Club! Further, the Chaplain later said that one of his prisoners was due to be released the following week and would need some clothes, if possible. These were duly sourced and the prisoner released – into the Bromley area where Patrick is also DC President! Patrick said that the released prisoner is now housed near Westminster and SVP are working with him to establish links with the local SVP prisons group – "Truly the Holy Spirit at work," he said.

Patrick Greenidge
 patrickgreenidge@aol.com

North-East SVP Approved Premises doing well, despite Covid-19

SVP National Trustee Michael Wilcock said that the APs (Approved Premises) at Ozanam House and St Christopher's in Newcastle are continuing to function well though at reduced capacity because of Covid precautions. Ozanam House is operating at about 72% occupancy and St Christopher's 73%.

Both have a high percentage of successful move-ons and both have achieved the Enabling Environment Award. All staff and residents (at the time of writing) have received the Covid vaccination. The SVP Management Committee meets with the Committee Manager and AP Managers bi-monthly to receive reports and updates and to offer support. All staff are committed and supportive. At Christmastime, the SVP Tyne Central Council gave each resident a £20 gift voucher and card both of which were much appreciated. Residents are invited to complete an exit survey prior to a successful move-on and, though not all do, one recently completed survey contained these comments:

“All the staff are exceptional in their support, help and guidance towards all residents.”

“They are friendly, approachable, professional in dealing with any queries.”

“They have treated me with courtesy and respect throughout my stay, staff never judged me despite it being my second visit here.”

“I was made to feel welcome and nothing was too much trouble.”

“The food is excellent quality and the quantity – so much so that I have put weight on!”

Michael Wilcock michaelw@svp.org.uk

‘Firebreak’ lockdown ending at HMP Berwyn

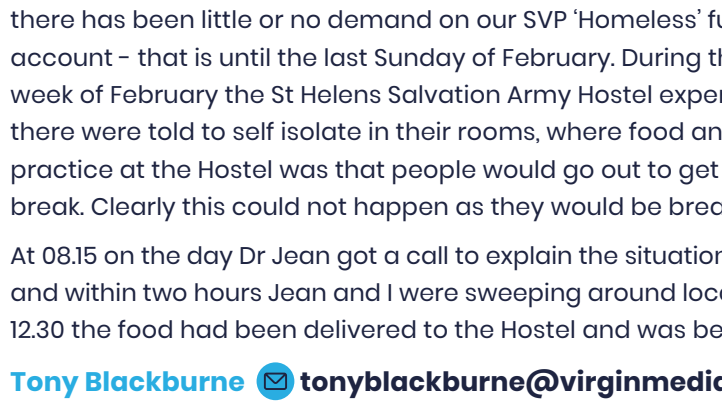
SVP Conference Member and Lay Chaplain Anne Coleman reported that the three week 'Firebreak' lockdown at HMP Berwyn is being gradually lifted as we approach Easter, enabling men to access the gym and be more able to socialise in their houses.

Meantime, a meeting with two of the Governors has been held to progress initial ideas to create some form of 'Resettlement Office' in the grounds, to assist the men who have issues with support and accommodation, on release. The plan is to establish a 'community'- type facility which can also be accessed by ex-offenders who live locally but are finding it difficult to re-integrate into society.

Anne confirmed that the men are grateful to continue to receive literature for their individual faiths but very much look forward to returning to the Chaplaincy for full Services – hopefully in the not-too-distant-future.

John O'Sullivan.co.uk

john@johnosullivan.co.uk



Support for prisoners at HMP Littlehey

Prisons groups being developed in the Midlands and south of England



SVP National Vice President James Bellamy was pleased to confirm that the SVP Working with Prisons groups at Wellingborough and Rushden had recently obtained funding to help up to ten prisoners leaving HMP Littlehey, near Huntingdon in Cambridgeshire. James said that funding amounted to about £40 per prisoner and would be used to purchase a set of clothes or a mobile phone, much-needed if newly-released prisoners are to be able to make a new start in earnest.

James also said that he is working to establish and develop new prisons groups, notably in and around Bedford, to provide support following the opening of HMP Five Wells, near Wellingborough, later this year or early next.

James Bellamy jamesb@svp.org.uk

SVP Working for the Homeless

‘Dynamic Duo’ of Tony Blackburne and Dr Jean Sutton save Sunday Lunch for St Helens homeless

St Francis HMP Hindley Conference Member and Lay Chaplain Anne Coleman reported that the three week 'Firebreak' lockdown at HMP Berwyn is being gradually lifted as we approach Easter, enabling men to access the gym and be more able to socialise in their houses.

Tony picks up the story: "Over lockdown the homeless in the St Helens area have been housed in various hostels and hotels and so there has been little or no demand on our SVP 'Homeless' funding account – that is until the last Sunday of February. During the last week of February the St Helens Salvation Army Hostel experienced an outbreak of Covid 19 and all the people staying there were told to self isolate in their rooms, where food and essential items would be brought to them. Previous usual practice at the Hostel was that people would go out to get their own lunches on Sundays, to give catering staff a break. Clearly this could not happen as they would be breaking self isolation rules.

At 08.15 on the day Dr Jean got a call to explain the situation and to ask for ideas. In true SVP style she leapt into action and within two hours Jean and I were sweeping around local supermarkets gathering 'Meal Deals' and filling trolleys. By 12.30 the food had been delivered to the Hostel and was being distributed by a very grateful staff. Total cost £220.44p."

Tony Blackburne tonyblackburne@virginmedia.com



Plans in-hand for HMP Liverpool (Walton), when Covid restrictions lifted

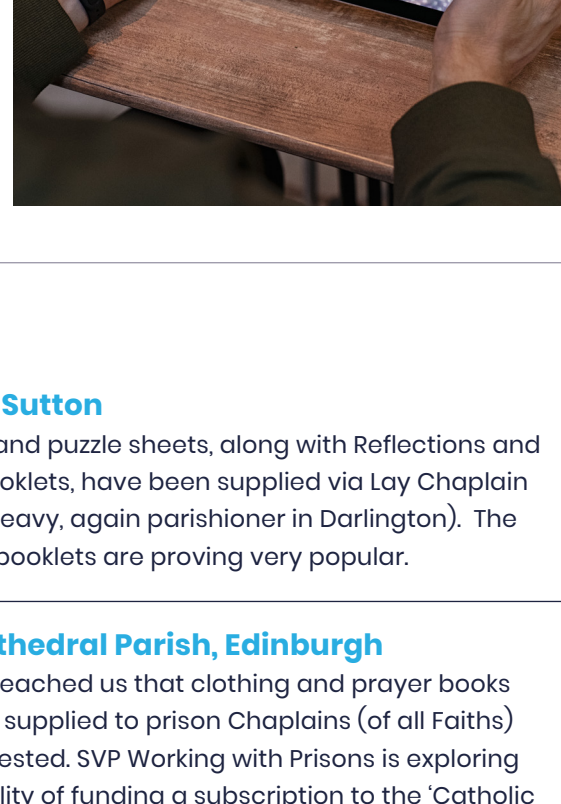
SVP Working with Prisons group member Barry Kirby said that he had recently met with HMP Liverpool Chaplain Talha Ahmad and colleagues and confirmed that plans are, "well in-hand" to develop closer links between SVP and the prison's Chaplaincy team, as soon as Covid-19 restrictions are lifted. Barry said that Liverpool had suffered greatly during the pandemic and that several Chaplains and volunteers, including retired Dominican Monk Brother Will, had been taken poorly.

Amongst a number of initiatives being used to enable the prison to, "undertake their statutory duties and general support," Barry said that, "Liverpool is considering towards installing video calls to the men, in-line with other prisons, using technology from the approved IT communications platform Purple Visits".

Meantime, Barry said he is busy trying to find DVD players for the men.

"All help gratefully received," he said.

Barry Kirby bkirby2424@gmail.com



In brief...

HMP Berwyn

Is being supported by St Werburgh's Chester SVP Conference, to the tune of £80, for the purchase of bags of 'Mini Easter Eggs' for its men.

HMP Hindley

Where reports say that since the men are on almost 23hr lockdown, work on its 'Wellbeing Garden' has virtually ground to a halt, with the welfare of the prison's animals taking top priority. 'Livestock' numbers currently stand at three rabbits, two guinea pigs, eight finches and six budgerigars, though with spring just around the corner it is anticipated that numbers will increase – naturally.

HMP New Hall

SVP Member Eileen Bolas from Wakefield has delivered more than 70 jigsaw puzzles to HMP New Hall.

HMP Manchester (Strangeways)

Where the men inside have their own SVP Conference have confirmed that they remain active – but not as active as usual, because of the Covid-19 restrictions.

HMP Risley

Recently requested clothing for a prisoner being released. SVP responded immediately with offers.

HMP Forest Bank

Four SVP Conferences have been working together to collect DVDs and clothing for HMP Forest Bank, whilst...

HMP Styl

...lots of wool and woollen goods have been gathered for the women inside, through Angela Pentin, the RC Chaplain there.

HMVOI Deerbolt

St Augustine's Darlington Conference supplied £120 worth of bags of chocolate for use at Christmas as prizes for games held during the festive period. Puzzles and colouring sheets have been delivered to the Chaplaincy and are much appreciated by the 'lads' in residence. A member of the Education staff at the prison who is a parishioner in Darlington has joined the SVP and hopefully this will lead to further support activities being developed.

HMP Full Sutton

Colouring and puzzle sheets, along with Reflections and prayers booklets, have been supplied via Lay Chaplain (Brian Dunleavy, again parishioner in Darlington). The Reflection booklets are proving very popular.

SVPd Cathedral Parish, Edinburgh

Word has reached us that clothing and prayer books have been supplied to prison Chaplains (of all Faiths) when requested. SVP Working with Prisons is exploring the possibility of funding a subscription to the 'Catholic Universe' newspaper for some prisoners in Scotland.

MySpace Housing

We understand that MySpace Housing (myspacehousing.org) have possible supported housing locations throughout the north west, depending on vacancies. Apparently they can provide accommodation for prisoners on release but a referral has to be made from a worker within the prison.

Recovery Homes

Recovery Homes (Shared Accommodation) may also be able to provide supported accommodation (recoveryhomes.org.uk/contact-us)

Jim Mellor (Wigan DC President) is keeping in weekly contact with a prisoner who is expected to complete his sentence in the summer

He will be released without appropriate accommodation. Jim considers that it would be wonderful if somebody in the SVP could help.

Jim thinks that this man after many years inside needs more support and help to occupy his time, with say volunteering in some way. In many ways this man is typical of so many other women and men who have failed on being released and still have so much to offer if helped.

Any ideas out there?

Ian Kempson ian.kempson11@gmail.com

SVP Working with specialist Partners

Befriending is the unique and special service that SVP is able to provide. Through its new 'Special Work', the Working with Prisons group, this service is being extended, developed and delivered in conjunction with a number of specialist support organisations and partners.

In future newsletters we will aim to introduce and explore a new 'partner', to try to illustrate the many ways in which our work together really will help to alleviate the blight of poverty and exclusion suffered by Prisoners, ex-Offenders and their Families.

In this edition we are delighted to introduce **The Shannon Trust**.

The Shannon Trust supports thousands of prisoners each year to transform their lives by unlocking the power of reading.

For most of us, reading is a skill we take for granted. For thousands of people in prison, reading a letter from home, a job application or a newspaper is impossible. Shannon Trust helps to change this, giving adults in prison the chance to learn to read 1-to-1 with a fellow prisoner (or visitor – perhaps an SVP member) peer Mentor.

Nearly 50% of people in prison have a literacy level at or below what's needed for successful employment; many can't read at all. Not being able to read in prison reduces access to education, training and rehabilitation programmes, and on release reduces the chances of a new and different life.

Prisoners who can't read often feel embarrassed, vulnerable and isolated when faced with being unable to read letters from home, know what they are choosing from the meal menu or make an application for health care.

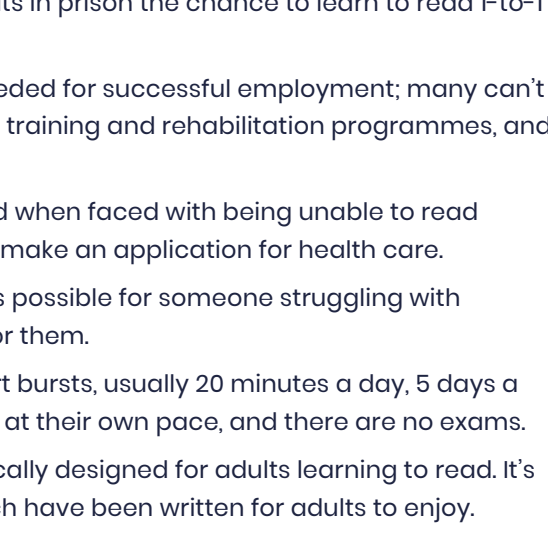
The Shannon Trust reading programme is designed to make it as easy as possible for someone struggling with reading to begin to learn and improve their skills when the time is right for them.

Trained prisoner Mentors work on a 1-to-1 basis with their Learners in short bursts, usually 20 minutes a day, 5 days a week. Sessions take place in a safe, private space and Learners progress at their own pace, and there are no exams.

The reading programme uses 'Turning Pages', a reading scheme, specifically designed for adults learning to read. It's made up of 5 manuals and 30 accompanying grade reading books which have been written for adults to enjoy.

Shannon Trust's nationwide team of volunteers train and support Mentors in prison, and work closely with staff in prisons to make the Shannon Trust available to anyone struggling with reading.

If you are interested in the work of The Shannon Trust, or feel that it may be something that you or your Conference could be involved in, please visit their website: www.shannontrust.org.uk



ShannonTrust
unlocking the power of reading

Summer Newsletter

The next SVP Working with Prisons newsletter is the Summer 2021 edition, due for publication at the end of June. All articles, items and photographs are welcome.

Please send to John O'Sullivan, St Werburgh's Chester Conference.

john@johnosullivan.co.uk

If you would like more information on the SVP Working with Prisons 'Special Work', please email one of the lead contacts or advisors:

SVP Prisons Lead: Ian Kempson

ian.kempson11@gmail.com

Secretary: Kevin McKenna

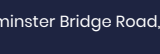
kevin.mckenna70@ntlworld.com

Prison Visiting: Tony Blackburne

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Spiritual Advisor: Fr Paul Shaw

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