

News from Caritas Westminster, for priests and parishioners

Happy Feast of St Josephine Bakhita!

Yesterday, 8th February, was the feast day of St Josephine Bakhita, after whom Caritas Bakhita House is named. We ask for her prayers for all those who are enslaved or have been trafficked, and we offer thanks for all the good work done by Bakhita House, and the many other charities and organisations fighting against modern slavery and human trafficking, such as the Santa Marta Group. The 2022 Annual report from Bakhita House is now available – just go to the Caritas Westminster website and click through. www.caritaswestminster.org.uk

Earthquake in Turkey and Syria

The devastating earthquakes this week in Turkey and Syria are on the top of our minds. Donations can, of course, be directed through CAFOD who will be supporting the work of church agencies on the ground. We pray for our brothers and sisters in Caritas Turkey and Caritas Syria, and you can read about their initial response here: <https://www.caritas.org/2023/02/earthquake-in-turkey-and-syria-caritas-network-launches-first-phase-of-aid/>

Warm Spaces

Nineteen parishes have told us that they are running Warm Spaces – and most of these have been supported with a grant from Caritas Westminster. We recently asked them for feedback and what they told us was heartwarming. In many places the opening up of the Warm Space has created a community centre where real friendships are forming and people from diverse backgrounds are sharing with and supporting each other. If you have a few minutes, do read the story on our website here: <https://www.caritaswestminster.org.uk/latest-news.php>

Should your parish be featured here? If you are running a Warm Space, or something similar, or are hoping to respond to the Cost of Living crisis in some other way, please get in touch with Sr Silvana silvanadallanegra@rcdow.org.uk

Cost of Living Crisis

You may find useful these two new videos from Compassionate Communities (part of the Anglican Diocese of London) and the Joint Public Issues Team (Methodist Church), aimed at volunteers and staff in parishes and projects, who are working in their communities with those on low income. As Alison explains in the first video, this information alone won't qualify anyone to give benefits advice, but it can help with offering support, and understanding the system and why people struggle.

Universal Credit: a basic introduction and how to help people with a claim:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MlcV-3xHDS0>

Universal Credit: understanding the system design:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eKMPJYU5xT0&t=6s>

Volunteer recruitment

As you know, the Caritas Volunteer Service is available to help you encourage more parishioners to get involved in the life of the church. This lent, alongside the Cardinal's Lenten Appeal, we are encouraging parishes to ask people to give their time. Look out for some posters arriving in the mail in the next few days, alongside the usual fundraising materials, which you can use to help you encourage volunteering.

Volunteer recruitment could help your parish:

- To give parishioners the opportunity to give back and to cultivate a sense of purpose.
- To build on diversity, inclusion and belonging in parishes
- To help more people access the Eucharist
- To welcome visitors and new arrivals
- To reach out to those who feel disengaged or left out

If you missed our online information event on Thursday 26th January, the video of the meeting can be seen on YouTube:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mZQmQ4eE_Pc

Do get in touch with the Caritas Volunteer Service if you would like to know more, including if you would like more Volunteer Service leaflets. cvs@rcdow.org.uk.

We are also hoping that more parishes will find someone to volunteer as a **Caritas Parish Representative**. These are our key contacts in parishes to share news of local opportunities for mission and outreach, networking, training and formation in Catholic Social Teaching. They help put up posters, raise awareness in the parish and with local schools, they let us know about local need, provide information on the amazing community outreach and share data and stories so that we can work together towards social justice.

Find all the details here: <https://www.caritaswestminster.org.uk/parish-social-action.php>

The Caritas Representative might want to work alongside the Justice and Peace Representative (in some parishes they are the same person) to cover all elements of the church's teaching on social justice. Find out more about J&P contacts here: <https://westminsterjusticeandpeace.org/parish-contacts/>

Police Recruitment from Ethnic Minorities

Minet Masho, Caritas Development worker for East London, has been working with the metropolitan police on a scheme aimed at recruiting more ethnic minorities and women into the police force. They have had a successful trial of this programme with the Congolese community.

If you feel that your parish community might be interested in this programme, please contact Minet: minetmasho@rcdow.org.uk

Something to think about during **Racial Justice Week** this week.

Events

For people working with those experiencing homelessness or other hardships:

In collaboration with The Upper Room, Caritas Westminster would like to invite you to learn about the work of organisations *Social Bite* and *Beam*, and the support they might be able to offer the people you are working with.

Routes out of Homelessness - Stepping Stones - Dignified Work Series

Mondays 20th February and 27th March 2023, 10:00 - 12:00

Find out more and sign up here: <https://www.caritaswestminster.org.uk/event-list.php>

Animating Parish Seniors Groups - Conference

Thursday 20th April 2023, 10:00 - 16:00

Westminster Cathedral Hall – Lunch will be provided.

This Conference, jointly organised by Caritas Westminster and the Irish Chaplaincy, is for all parishes, agencies or groups who accompany or work with older people in the Diocese of Westminster.

A Collaboration between Caritas Westminster, the Agency for Evangelisation, Irish Chaplaincy, St Vincent de Paul Society and Anna Chaplaincy, this event will:

- Respond to the synodal listening in our parishes
- Celebrate the older people in our parishes
- Bring together all organisations and groups who work with older people
- Inspire hope in older age
- Generate ideas and introduce new programmes to parishes
- Promote diversity and inclusion and accessibility
- Provide a legacy of support for projects with Seniors

Click here for more information: <https://www.caritaswestminster.org.uk/animating-parish-seniors-groups-conference-1448.php>

- In advance of this meeting, we would like to find out about any parish groups or activities aimed at supporting people in later life. If there is something happening in your parish please email merielwoodward@rcdow.org.uk with the details.