

Forty Years of The Passage a Lenten Journey Day 33 Lent week 5 Friday Passage 2012/13

There were several interesting developments this year. The most prominent development was that The Passage received planning permission to redevelop St Vincent's Centre, but more on that in the next few years. Our street outreach work carried out through a team called street link had been gradually developing. We had a team of eight staff engaged in this work providing outreach shifts every day of the week, including late nights and early mornings. During the year, the team recruited a number of volunteers, including a GP and former clients, to complement the service. It also carried out joint shifts with specialist mental health workers to ensure that people with mental health issues could be assessed - if necessary, on the street. Also, for the first time, members of the Day Services and Residential Services teams joined Outreach staff in carrying out shifts as a way of increasing our joint work with particularly resistant and hard-to-reach clients. By meeting the staff members who would be directly working with them in our other services we were able to encourage some clients to use the Day Centre or accept a room in Passage House.

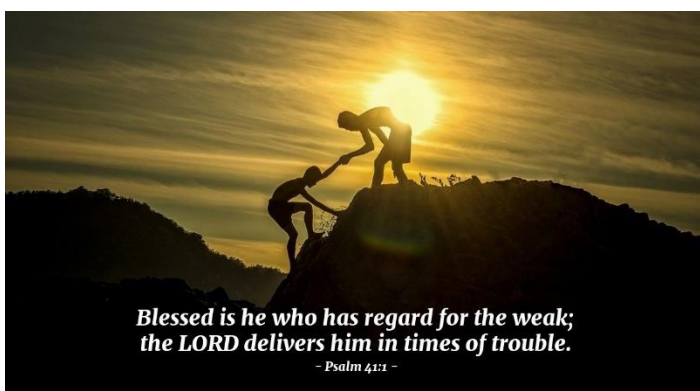
The team also employs an Information Officer who is responsible for collating and analysing information about the clients who have been met and worked with. This helps to identify important trends in client profiles and issues and puts the team in a strong position to change working practices or interventions when necessary. The detailed statistics kept by outreach teams across London had identified 205 longer term homeless people either some people who had literally slept out continuously for years or more commonly moved in a cycle of rough sleeping and short-term accommodation.

We received funding to move Michael, an experienced housing worker who by background is a solicitor to concentrate on 39 individuals as part of a joint charity project where all 205 clients had an allocated worker. He worked closely with the street link team to assist these 40 people to end their homelessness. He had access to additional resources to provide support around health, housing, employment, and any other barriers to moving away from homelessness. This method of working was very successful.

Today at The Passage we continue to give priority to the most excluded. We work with those with no recourse to public funds. Many of these people may neither work nor claim benefits and we look for those generous enough to accommodate them whilst sorting out immigration and other legal issues in order that they may work or claim benefits.

Can you help with this work either through donating or helping us find accommodation?

Today we pray psalm 41 from evening prayer: **Lord, lay your healing hand upon me, for I have sinned.**



*Blessed is he who has regard for the weak;
the LORD delivers him in times of trouble.*

- Psalm 41:1 -

Happy the man who considers the poor and the weak. The Lord will save him in the day of evil, will guard him, give him life, make him happy in the land and will not give him up to the will of his foes. The Lord will help him on his bed of pain, he will bring him back from sickness to health.

As for me, I said: Lord, have mercy on me, heal my soul for I have sinned against you." My foes are speaking evil against me. how long before he dies, and his name be forgotten? They come to visit me and speak empty words, their hearts full of malice, they spread it abroad.

But you, O Lord, have mercy on me. Let me rise once more and I will repay them. By this I shall know that you are my friend, if my foes do not shout in triumph over me. If you uphold me, I shall be unharmed and set in your presence for ever more.

Lord, lay your healing hand upon me, for I have sinned.

Forty Years of The Passage a Lenten Journey Day 34 Lent week 5 Saturday Passage 2013/14

The theme of the annual report was people, and we will look at Ronnie who was one of the people featured. Ronnie is one of eight full-time workers on the Outreach Team. He works in shifts on a seven-day rota, including one early morning a week starting at 6am, and one evening a week that can go on until 3 or 4am. He also works at least one weekend each month.

The team's first volunteer - he has been a full-time member since 2012 - he had previously been volunteering in the Resource Centre. Now there are six regular volunteers who work at weekends. Ronnie has great admiration for them: "It's a huge commitment", he says, "for people who work all the week to get up early at weekends to go out with the team."

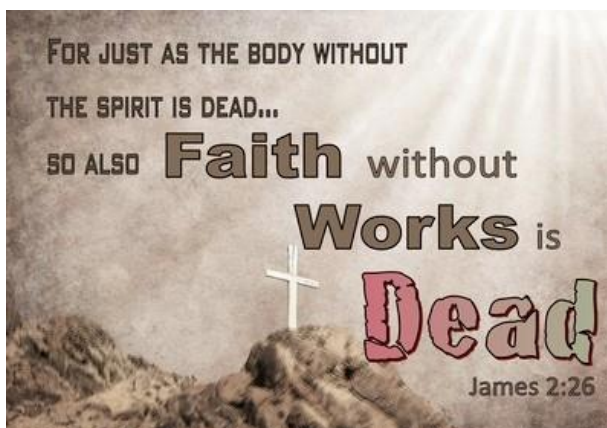
Ronnie is particularly well suited to outreach work: he lost his job and became homeless in 2001. He received a lot of help, he says, and once he would "sorted himself out" wanted to give something back by helping other homeless people. He understands the problems they face, how important it is to build trust and relationships with them, and to keep encouraging them to come into the Resource Centre.

The work of Montfort House had developed over the last two years as a way of building intense support around people moving into a self-contained flat directly from the street for those who would not move into a traditional hostel. The report included the following description: -

Montfort House, consisting of 16 self-contained flats, continues to target the most entrenched and vulnerable people - male and female - in Westminster (the RS 205 client group, originally the 205 longest term rough sleepers). The team has developed to meet the changing needs of the client group and project and now consists of a manager and 3 support workers. Our flexible hands-off approach has been very successful, so much so that we have developed our own policy around professional boundaries and best practice when working with entrenched clients called Real Relationships. We have also developed a client handbook which is presented in user friendly language and contains useful information about the project and the local area and the staff team.

In addition to the developments detailed above we have introduced several other creative interventions designed to support our clients in maintaining their accommodation. Elastic Evictions is one of these interventions and is designed to give the client a way of returning to the project in situations where safety is not compromised. Goodbye Letters are another tool we use when a client has been asked to leave and an Elastic Eviction is not appropriate. The goodbye letter expresses our sadness about having to ask a client to leave and explains the reasons why we did this. It also lists the areas a client might want to work on if they would like to be considered for a place at Montfort House in the future. We hope that by sending these letters it will go some way to reducing the negative impact recurring evictions can have on the client."

The report noted that 34 of the 39 long term rough sleepers allocated to The Passage last year had moved off the street within a year. The Passage was the most successful part of the initiative.



The Passage today continues in the tradition of helping the most marginalised. Montfort House continues to work with those who have failed elsewhere and often to take back those who have initially rejected help.

We reflect today on the words of St James' Epistle. 'Someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith.'

Forty Years of The Passage a Lenten Journey Day 35 Holy Week Monday Passage 2014/15

In the annual report Mick Clarke wrote about this key year.

“2014/15 has been a momentous year for The Passage. St Vincent’s Centre, which houses so many projects vital to homeless people, was literally falling apart and the task of raising the funds to carry out a comprehensive building refurbishment programme was a considerable challenge. We expect most of the refurbishment to be complete by the end of 2015. I am proud to report that all our services to homeless people have continued during the work.

These works will transform St Vincent’s Centre and The Passage: we will finally have a high-quality building that matches the services we run. It will also act as a catalyst for a new Passage, as we develop new services in line with our five-year strategy. Many thanks are due to so many people for enabling The Passage to carry out these works.

The Passage is in the business of rebuilding lives and helping each individual we meet end their homelessness for good. We will continue to build on the strong foundation of our Vincentian Values to ensure that The Passage is always there for those who are most in need.”

The report included two new initiatives.

For the past few years, The Passage has run the pan-London Faith Based Groups Co-ordination Project. Funded by the Greater London Authority, the project employs two workers to improve the role that voluntary, community and faith-based groups play in helping to end rough sleeping in London, and to help improve their partnership working with statutory and commissioned services such as local authorities, outreach teams and day centres.

Over the past year we have made significant progress through this project, with several organisations which previously operated soup runs in central London hotspots being supported to develop their own building-based services offering a wider range of targeted support to people experiencing homelessness and social isolation. We have also assisted numerous day centres to develop their service through sharing best practice from organisations based all over Greater London and have engaged with various faith-based groups to raise awareness of homelessness and how to best respond to this in their local communities.

We have recently begun to develop the new Home for Good project, which focuses on preventing repeat homelessness through providing ongoing support to clients who have been resettled into their own accommodation. A co-ordinator has set up the new weekend social club based close to The Passage but in a separate building and have developed a volunteer-led service to provide local support across Greater London. Initially targeted at clients of The Passage who were moving on to their own accommodation, the service has more recently been expanded to accommodate referrals from other homelessness agencies.

Today at The Passage Home for Good successfully supports many former homeless people to remain in their accommodation. We are planning to expand this work outside London can your contribution help. As our journey through Holy Week begins, we meditate on Isaiah 42:1-7:

Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him, he will bring forth justice to the nations.

He will not cry or lift up his voice or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice.

He will not fail or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law.

Thus, says God, the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread forth the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk in it:

“I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.

Forty Years of The Passage a Lenten Journey Day 36 Holy Week Tuesday Passage 2015/16

2015/16 was a year of building work transition
Mick Clarke wrote:-

“The Passage made a true difference in the past year. I never cease to be amazed by our clients’ courage and resilience.

Our newly refurbished St Vincent’s Centre is a building that matches the high quality services we provide. The new surroundings are already making a significant impact: monthly job outcomes have more than doubled since moving into the new building. The Passage is extremely grateful to the organisations that funded the refurbishment and, by so doing, ensured that donated

funding was able to go to our services rather than having to be used for the refurbishment.

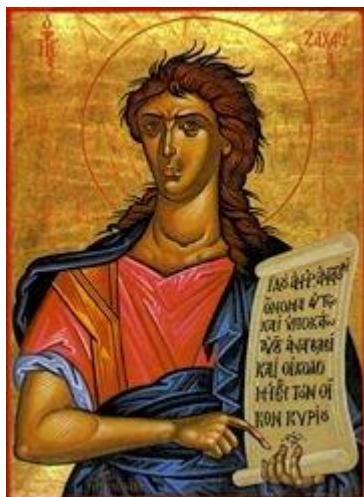


The Duke of Cambridge opened the refurbished St Vincent’s Centre

We treat the people who use our services in the way we would want to be treated in the same situation. We are truly blessed with amazing staff and volunteers who never stop trying to find solutions to what can sometimes seem to be insurmountable problems. In an economic climate in which more people are ending up on the streets, the impact we make is important. We give people the dignity they deserve, link them in with the specialist services they need, help them find employment and accommodation, and ensure there is ongoing support available after they have moved on.

Despite further cuts to come in our statutory funding, we are determined to ensure that The Passage continues to be the place that people can turn to when there is nowhere else. I am very grateful to everyone who ensured that we had the funds to carry out these much-needed services and that The Passage was there for those who needed it the most. St Vincent de Paul, from whom we take our Values, said that “kindness is the key to hearts”. While most of us will never have been homeless, we have all experienced inner homelessness: times when we have suffered bereavement, loneliness, or have been at a loss to know what to do. We remember the person we turned to in that moment of crisis, and the love and care they showed for us.

Today at The Passage we continue to benefit from the refurbishment as we will read later this week.



Look with love on those who suffer because of our indifference, - come to their aid, and turn our uncaring hearts to justice and charity.

You humbled yourself by being obedient even to accepting death, death on a cross, - give all who serve you the gifts of obedience and patient endurance.

Zechariah 12:10-11a

And I will pour out a spirit of compassion and supplication on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that, when they look on the one whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.