

How can I help the people in need in my Parish? I worry about those who are lonely, homeless, depressed or families living in poverty. The Society of St Vincent de Paul (SVP) work locally in our Catholic Parishes to help those in need.

A typical SVP group is made up of around 10 volunteer members of the Parish who work together to meet the needs of their community by visiting those in need, to offer comfort and support in whatever ways we can.

*“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” **Matthew 25:35-36***

The SVP is full of extraordinary stories, one member recounts “We had a message about a lady and her 2 young sons, she was being housed in our area in an unfurnished flat. She was fleeing domestic violence, she had only clothes and a TV and was arriving in under a week! She was understandably terrified. We rallied round, found furniture for all the rooms, a Christmas food hamper, toys and presents for the boys. We continued to work with her to find school spaces for her children, to introduce her to those in her immediate area to and still visit to provide support as she integrates. She is now thriving and we are so blessed now to call them friends.”

Members of the SVP turn their Concern into Action in so many other ways too:

- I was lonely and you visited me
- I was depressed and you loved me till I dared to hope again
- I was bereaved and you comforted me
- I was homeless and you found shelter for me
- I was about to be evicted and you negotiated with me
- I was struggling to feed my children and you went shopping with me

The SVP is an International charity working in over 150 countries. In England & Wales, the SVP has nearly 10,000 members and carry out 500,000 visits to people in need each year. In Brentwood Diocese, there are over 450 members in 43 SVP groups based in Parishes and we are working hard to grow this number!

How can I get involved? By contacting Jenny Clayton, Membership Development Officer for the SVP in Brentwood Diocese. Email JennyC@SVP.org.uk or phone/text Jenny on 07796 393131. Jenny would be especially keen to hear from anyone wishing to become a member, start a SVP group in their Parish or those that are already members and would like to share their experiences.