



Society of St Vincent de Paul

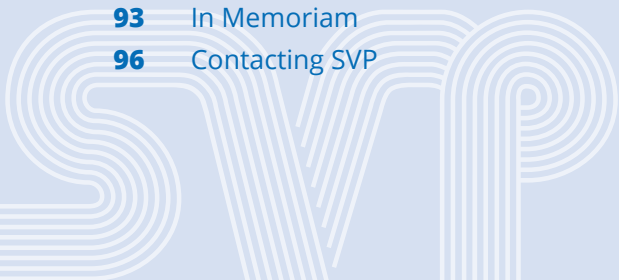


Vincetian News

Yearbook 2022

Contents

- 01** Saint Vincent de Paul
- 02** SVP Services
- 03** How SVP Responds
- 04** Spiritual Reflection by Fr Perry Gildea C.M.
- 06** Welcome from Regional President, Mary Waide
- 08** Mary's Maundy Service Invitation
- 10** St Vincent de Paul Regional Board
- 12** St Vincent de Paul Regional Staff
- 14** The Role of An Area President
- 15** Spotlight On Area Presidents
- 19** Regional Focus
- 26** SVP Celebrates Christmas
- 36** The Difference SVP Makes
- 38** A Word of Encouragement
- 39** Retail
- 53** Membership
- 74** Safeguarding
- 76** Social Justice
- 79** Young SVP
- 85** West Belfast Childcare Facility
- 86** SVP Celebrates
- 90** SVP in the Media
- 92** Dates For Your Diary
- 92** Cover Story
- 93** Book of Life
- 93** In Memoriam
- 96** Contacting SVP



St Vincent de Paul



The Society of St Vincent de Paul (SVP) was established in Ireland in 1844. It is the largest voluntary charitable organisation in Ireland. Our focus is on a practical approach to dealing with poverty, alleviating its effects on individuals and families through working primarily in person-to-person contact by a unique system of Home Visitation and seeking to achieve social justice and equality of opportunity for all citizens.

The Society promotes community self-sufficiency, enabling people to help themselves. Any assistance offered by the Society is given in a non-judgemental spirit, based on the needs of the individual or family seeking help.

The Society respects the dignity of those who contact us, offering assistance and advice when sought, maintaining their dignity while assisting them towards long-term self-sufficiency in a relationship of friendship, trust and confidentiality.

Our Mission and Ethos

SVP is a Christian voluntary organisation, working with people experiencing poverty and disadvantage. We are involved in a diverse range of activities characterised by:



Support and friendship

Through person-to-person contact, we are committed to respecting the dignity of those we assist and fostering self-respect. We assure confidentiality at all times and endeavour to establish relationships based on trust and friendship.



Promoting self-sufficiency

It is not enough to promote short-term material support. Those we assist are also helped to achieve self-sufficiency in the longer term and the sense of self-worth this provides. When problems are beyond our competence we enlist the support of specialised help.



Working for Social Justice

We are committed to identifying the root cause of poverty and social exclusion and, in solidarity with the disadvantaged and those living in poverty, to advocate and work for the changes required to create a more just and caring society.

SVP Services



Home Visits



Homeless Services + Other Centres



Education Support



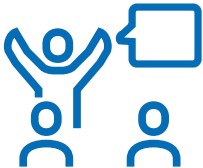
Resource Centres



Youth Programmes + Services



Budget Counselling



Social Justice Advocacy



Food Distribution



Community Development Services



Young SVP Youth Programmes



Twinning Programmes

How SVP Responds



Home Visits



Online



Services and Resources Centres



Phone

How SVP Helps

160

Conferences across Northern Ireland

18

Area Councils

SVP Expenditure in 2022

£3,500,000

Who SVP Helps

51%

increase in requests for assistance in last quarter of 2022 compared to same period in 2021

SVP Regional Office requests in quarter four of 2022

14,144 requests

2,585 calls for help with electricity, gas or home heating oil up from 1,350 in the same period last year

1,032 requests for help with food

1,864 requests for help with Christmas

256 requests for help with clothes – double the same period last year

SVP Charity Shops

30 across Northern Ireland

60 staff

500 volunteers

+20%

SVP has provided 20% more assistance financially this year to families and individuals. Provision of vouchers, food, clothes, white goods, fuel and oil have all increased substantially.

SVP Membership

129 new member applications completed compared to 58 in 2021.

103 new members completed online training with 88 completing face to face training compared to 43 completing online training and 34 completing face to face training in 2021.





Spiritual Reflection by Fr Perry Gildea C.M.

Ubi Caritas Est Ibi Deus Est – Where There is Love There Also is God

In the first week of this year, we buried Pope Benedict XVI 10 years after he startled the world by resigning as Pope. The papers were quick to review his life and mention his reputation as a conservative theologian. As Pope, he revealed a somewhat different aspect of his theology and spirituality. His wonderful encyclical letters on Love (charity) and Hope were both positive and comforting.

In *Deus Caritas Est* (God is Love) he closely echoes the sentiments of both St Vincent and Ozanam who frequently insisted we should see the face of Christ in the poor. "Love of the neighbour...consists in the very fact that, in God and with God, I can love even the person whom I do not like or even know. On the basis of an intimate encounter with God...I learn to look on this other person not simply with my eyes and feelings but from the perspective of Jesus Christ. His friend is my friend" (DC 18). This is a serious reminder that love and faith are at the heart of the work and life of all Vincentians. Pope Benedict makes a rather startling criticism of merely pious spirituality. "If in my life I fail completely to heed others out of a desire to be 'devout' and to perform my 'religious duties' then

my relationship with God will also grow arid. It becomes merely 'proper', but loveless" (DC 18).

Love of God and service of the neighbour are mutually supportive. "If I have no contact whatsoever with God in my life, then I cannot see in the other anything more than the other, and I am incapable of seeing in them the image of God." The loving service of the neighbour becomes also our pathway to a deeper relationship with our heavenly Father. Our readiness to encounter our neighbour and show them love makes us sensitive to God's love for us as well. "Only if I serve my neighbour (with love) can my eyes be opened to what God does for me and how much he loves me" (DC 18).

The Eucharist might be called the school of love. It is there we encounter the greatest gift of God's love for humanity. The willing sacrifice of Christ for the salvation of the world, the loving laying down of his life. "God so loved the world that he sent his only Son" (Jn 3:16). Here, we can remember a repeated thought of Benedict - "Being a Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction" (DC 1). This encounter is renewed with each loving visit to those in need and the loving answer to that need, just as truly as it is renewed in our sacramental encounter with God's love in the Eucharist. Each needs the other. "Where there is love, there is God."

In these difficult times of 2023, the work of the Society is recognised and appreciated by many and this is important, not as a public relations exercise but as a witness to the charitable nature of the Church and Christianity. "Love of the neighbour, grounded in the love of God is a responsibility of the entire ecclesial community," and this love requires organisation.

This would have pleased both St Vincent and Blessed Frédéric as they insisted on aid being organised and were among the most successful organisers in the history of both charity and the Church. "As a community, the Church must practice love. Love needs to be organised if it is to be a service to the whole community". "Within the community of believers there can never be room for a poverty that denies anyone what is needed for a dignified life" (DC 20). Thus, the spirituality of the Society is both personal and a spirituality which also contributes to the mission of the Church.

Prayer for Blessed Frédéric Ozanam



Blessed Frédéric Ozanam

(In the hope of obtaining a miracle
through his intercession)

Heavenly Father, You,
inspired Blessed
Frédéric Ozanam to
alleviate poverty and
injustice and, endowed
him with untiring
generosity in the
service of all who were
suffering.

His vision for society
was a network of
charity encircling the
world and he imitated
St. Vincent de Paul's
spirit of love, boldness
and humility.

PTO>

His prophetic social
vision appears in his
teaching and every
aspect of his short life.
The radiance of his
virtues shone in his
family life, where he
revealed a most
genuine love as a
son, brother, husband
and father.

We thank you Lord,
for these many gifts
and we ask, the grace
of a miracle through
his intercession that
the Church may
proclaim his holiness,
as a saint, and an
inspirational model of
charity for our world.

We make this prayer
through Jesus Christ,
our Lord.

Amen



If you would like to obtain a copy of this prayer card,
please email info@svpni.co.uk

Welcome from Regional President, Mary Waide



I am proud to have represented St Vincent de Paul in the North Region for another year as Regional President.

It is a great privilege as a member to walk in the footsteps of St Vincent de Paul, St Louise de Marillac and our beloved founder Blessed Frédéric Ozanam. Frédéric served the poor in love and charity and radiated a glow of love and charity to all around him. Charity is the equivalent of love and can be confused with the giving of alms.

In our visitation we are not merely distributing alms without love in our hearts. In the words of our Conference Prayers we “Respond with open hearts to the sufferings of others, aware of the depths of our own needs”.

Although we had faith that we would be able to resume our Vincentian activities one day, during the pandemic we feared our members would not have the opportunity to meet face to face again or to engage in Home Visitation which is at the core of our work in the heart of our local areas.

Little did we realise that following the devastating impact of the pandemic, our members would be needed more than ever by families faced with impossible choices, brought about by the cost of living crisis, and I am so grateful to all our volunteers who have resumed invaluable Home Visitation in earnest to offer that much needed support that so many need.



Callers to our helplines and to Regional Office have increased beyond all expectation and I want to commend all of those involved in handling these calls, as well as referrals to our website, as the dedication to helping those requesting support with the utmost of sensitivity has been incredible.

Our donors are so important when it comes to enabling us to help the most vulnerable around us and the first North Region Donors' Day took place in Regional Office this year. It gave staff from National Office an opportunity to engage with our generous donors here in the North, to thank them personally and to tell them more about our work on the ground and how vital their support is.

I was delighted to welcome Rose McGowan, SVP National President, to our Volunteer's Week Garden Party where we celebrated 450 years of volunteering with those in attendance. We also welcomed Rose to our first Members Day since 2019 and there was a wonderful sense of members supporting one another throughout the day.

It has been a real privilege to me personally to have had the opportunity to take the message of the Society beyond our membership to the wider Northern Ireland public through radio and television interviews to raise awareness of how SVP is embedded in local communities throughout the Region.

And, as SVP Regional President for the North Region, I was honoured to be invited to a concert celebrating SVP receiving the Freedom of the City of Belfast, to Windsor Castle for the Maundy Service and to meet Archbishop Jude Thaddeus Okolo, the apostolic nuncio to Ireland, at a reception in Belfast.

Thank you for your continued commitment to the Society.

Mary Waide



Mary Waide, SVP Regional President for the North Region, and Rose McGowan, SVP National President, at SVP North Region Volunteers' Garden Party.

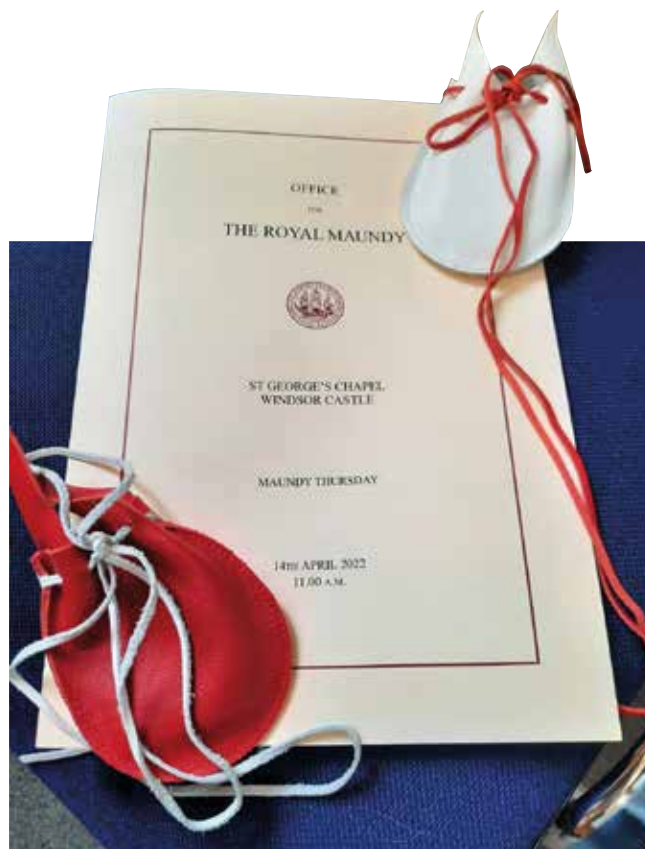
Mary's Maundy Service Invitation

Mary Waide, SVP Regional President for the North Region, attended the Maundy Thursday Service at St George's Chapel Windsor.

Speaking about her invitation, Mary said: "I was thrilled to receive an invitation to the Maundy Thursday Service at St George's Chapel Windsor Castle and was even more delighted when I was informed that I had been nominated to attend the service by The Most Reverend Noel Treanor, Bishop of Down and Connor, as Church of Ireland Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, had very generously shared one of his two places with our Diocese.

"It was a great honour to be able to represent St Vincent de Paul and be recognised for our work by HRH Prince Charles. He presented me with the Maundy Purses and, when shaking my hand, advised me that the specially minted coins were being presented to me on behalf of Her Majesty The Queen as a thank you for our work. One of only 96 women and 96 men to have been invited to the service, marking her 96th birthday, I was in awe as I witnessed the pomp and ceremony while watching the procession of clergy and Royal representatives take place right in front of me. I think I had one of the best seats in the chapel!

"The organ music was beautiful and the choir singing in the magnificent St George's Chapel was just breathtaking. We listened to the Holy Thursday readings and after the service we were welcomed to a Reception in Windsor State Apartments. Truly a once in a lifetime experience and one I will always remember as a highlight of my time as your Regional President."







St Vincent de Paul Regional Board

Mary Waide, Regional President

Regional President Mary Waide has been a member of SVP Blessed Virgin Conference in Ballymena for more than 20 years. She has had the privilege and experience of working in a very large, vibrant and active Conference with dedicated and committed members. On joining, she felt the warmth of the spirit of the Vincentian Family, which is so important in our work. Mary believes everyone goes into a meeting as equals. There is no hierarchy in SVP as everyone simply has different responsibilities.

Patrick Friel, Regional Treasurer

Currently Regional Treasurer, Patrick joined SVP after attending an inaugural meeting in the new Christ the King Chapel in Strathroy, Omagh, which was opened in 1979 to serve a large new housing estate nearby. An old dormant Conference was resurrected in the parish of Knockmoyle and Patrick is still a member of that Conference. He has been President and Treasurer and is currently Area President in Omagh Area where there are 8 Conferences and two successful shops. Patrick also acted as Regional President during 2020.

**Anne Irwin,
Regional Vice President**

A friend invited Anne to become a volunteer of her local Conference 20 years ago. She realised there was a level of poverty that she hadn't been aware of, prior to becoming a volunteer, and felt good giving something back to society by spending a couple of hours a week visiting those in need while providing food, electricity, coal etc. Before becoming Area President in 2019, Anne was Treasurer and originally had responsibility for 10 Visitation Conferences. Anne keeps in regular contact with Conference Presidents via phone, face-to-face and Zoom meetings.

**Henry O'Loan,
Regional Vice President**

Henry joined St Mary's Glenravel on 1 January 2007 and became President of St Mary's Glenravel in January 2014. He was subsequently elected as Area President for Mid Antrim in December 2017. He is also interested in adult faith development having joined the Adult Faith Development Pathways programme in Drumalis Retreat Centre in 2006 which he found engaged him in living his faith as a true Christian. It has enabled Henry to be a better visible sign of Christ and to be able to bear witness to his boundless love.

**Anne McLarnon,
Regional Secretary**

Just before she retired in 2015, Anne joined SVP. She wanted to help as she was aware of hardships many face from her previous work and chose SVP because of its Christian ethos. Early in 2017, Anne was invited to be Secretary of the Area Council, which was a great learning experience. North Down Ards is a very active area with 6 Visitation Conferences making it easier to keep in touch. The Conferences are always busy and the shops in Kircubbin are too, generating a great sense of community in the town and an area hub for people dropping in to browse and chat.

**Fr Perry,
Spiritual Advisor**

Fr Perry is the Spiritual Advisor for the Region. He has a Doctorate in Moral and Pastoral Theology from the Alphonsianum in Rome and a Masters in Liturgical Studies from Notre Dame, USA. Fr Perry formerly lectured in All Hallows College, Dublin, and in St Mary's College, Twickenham. He has extensive experience as a Spiritual Director and University Chaplain as well as having served as a Parish Priest in London. Fr Perry is a member of the Adult Faith Development team at Drumalis, developing and delivering programmes in collaboration with St Mary's University College, Belfast.

Board members Brendan McKernan and Peter McVeigh resigned in December 2022.

St Vincent de Paul Regional Staff



**Pauline Brown,
Regional Manager**
T: 028 9075 0150
E: pauline.brown@svpni.co.uk

Pauline manages the Regional staff team and supports the Regional President, Board and Council. She is responsible, along with the Regional Board, for the strategic management of the Region including, people, finances, property and projects. Pauline also supports and provides member guidance and development. She is responsible for media, networking, lobbying and the development of external relationships.



**Colm Crummey,
Regional Accountant &
Treasurer Support**
T: 028 9075 0155
E: colm.crummey@svpni.co.uk

Colm supports the Regional Manager, Regional Treasurer and Head of Finance & Shared Services. He is responsible for Regional Office accounting and payroll. Colm prepares budgets, financial analysis and forecasts and he reports to the Regional Board and Council on all regional balances. Colm assists in capital projects, property administration and ensures legal compliance in line with charity regulations.



**Ciaran Liggett,
Special Works & Treasurer
Support Officer**
T: 028 9075 0156
E: agresso.support@svpni.co.uk

Ciaran is responsible for Treasurer Training and provides Agresso Support to all Treasurers across the Region. He also processes all annual financial returns and quarterly bank balances and account information providing a report to the Regional Treasurer. Ciaran administers the Regional Oil Stamps Scheme and manages the Gift Aid, credit card donations, Blue Envelopes and all fundraising campaigns.



**Geraldine McStravick,
HR Service Partner**
T: 028 9086 0158
E: geraldine.mcstravick@svpni.co.uk

Geraldine provides support to managers, employees, office holders and members with any HR queries. She administers and provides full recruitment and selection advice, support and guidance. Ensuring full compliance with the SVP Recruitment and Selection policy, Geraldine manages the induction programme for new employees in collaboration with line managers.



**Thomas Reilly,
Information Support Officer,
Regional Office**

T: 028 9035 1561

E: thomas.reilly@svpni.co.uk

**Christine Gaston,
Information Support Officer,
Regional Office**

T: 028 9035 1561

E: info@svpni.co.uk

The Information Support Officers manage the referrals on a daily basis and provide administrative and technical support to members. They are responsible for the CRM database within the Region. Both Christine and Thomas provide support to the Region as a whole and manage the stocks and supplies for Regional Office.



**Shauna Murray,
Membership Support Officer, Belfast Office**

T: 028 9035 1561

E: shauna.murray@svpni.co.uk

Shauna works with Area Presidents within the Region and provides support on a range of membership matters. These include processing new member applications, Access NI checks and organising training. She also supports Area Presidents in their role on quality assurance, member compliance, record keeping and data cleansing on CRM. Shauna also assists with recruitment and retention of volunteers.

Joann Barr, Membership Support Officer, resigned December 2022.



**Anne Crossan,
Regional Retail Manager**

T: 028 9075 0153

E: anne.crossan@svpni.co.uk

Anne is responsible for business development for retail. She delivers on the National Retail Strategy and oversees operations of all Vincent's shops within the Region. Anne manages the teams of shop staff and volunteers. She is also responsible for stock rotation, recycling, customer service and satisfaction.

The Role of An Area President

What is the Purpose of an Area President?

An Area President provides support and guidance to the Regional President and Conferences in quality Home Visitation and all other activities, in accordance with the ethos and vision of the Society. An Area President is part of the Regional Council which is the decision making body of the Region.

An Area President should be:

- A member of a Conference for a minimum of two years
- Willing to step down from officer role of own Conference
- Willing to visit Conferences regularly

An Area President should:

- Embrace and promote the ethos of the Society
- Have good leadership skills
- Have good communication skills

What are the key tasks and responsibilities of an Area President?

- To be active by attending monthly Regional Council meetings
- To regularly visit Conferences in the Area for which you are responsible
- To record and hold Area Council meetings - minimum six times per year
- Appoint officers to an Area Board in accordance with 'The Rule' to assist the Area President
- To develop good working relationships with the Region's Member Support Officer (MSO)
- To set up new Conferences where a need is identified within the Area
- To ensure Conferences comply with 'The Rule'
- To ensure compliance with legal requirements and SVP policies and procedures, including SVP Safeguarding Policy and Procedures
- To ensure visits happen in pairs (preferably mixed pairs)
- To ensure there is two-way communication between Regional Council and Conferences
- To identify a successor for Area President in an appropriate timeframe
- To ensure finance is managed at Area and local level including fund sharing.

Spotlight On Area Presidents



Anne Irwin, North Antrim & North East Derry Area President

What is the best thing about living in your area?

I live in Coleraine and am within a 15-minute drive to the beautiful north coast and in particular Portstewart and Portrush.

Why did you join SVP?

Having spoken to a friend who had been an SVP member for a number of years, I realised that there were many families and individuals in my local area who were struggling and that I had not really been aware of this. I felt that in my own life I had a lot to be thankful for and that by volunteering a couple of hours a week, I would be giving something back to society.

What was it about SVP's ethos that interested you?

That everyone should have the means to live life with dignity.

How have you valued your membership?

I believe that it is a privilege to be an SVP volunteer and visit people who request our help and assistance. Along with one of my colleagues we spend time talking to them in their homes so that we can try and fully understand the issues they are facing and provide the best support. The most important thing for me is total confidentiality and not to be judgemental.

What is the best thing about being a member of SVP?

Being able to help people when they are really struggling, which sometimes can be just taking the time to listen to them when they have no one else they can speak to, as well as providing material help.

What are your hopes as Board Member and Area President?

As the largest charity in Ireland, that we will continue to grow stronger and embrace any changes and challenges ahead. Encourage younger members who have IT skills to join.

What would you say to someone who is considering becoming a member of SVP?

It is very fulfilling and be assured of the support of everyone, from your local Conference to Regional office.

What is your favourite colour?

I don't really have a favourite colour but I don't like red.

What is your favourite book?

I don't have a favourite book but I like reading Lesley Pearse novels.

How do you relax?

When I have time, I love to read and also like watching a good drama. One of my favourites is Silent Witness.

Tell us something unusual about yourself

I was the first female Excise Officer appointed at a well known Whiskey Distillery, more years ago than I can believe.



Spotlight On Area Presidents



Sean Johnston, North Down and Ards Area President

What is the best thing about living in your Area?

Bangor is a pleasant city to live in with a great coastal path and good transport links to the rest of Ireland. It also has a great community spirit and good schools.

When did you join SVP?

I joined SVP 12 years ago in 2011

Why did you join SVP?

Having previously worked in the Social Security Agency, I was aware of the difficulties experienced by lots of families. I joined SVP to help and support those in need in our local community.

What was it about SVP's ethos that interested you?

I liked the idea of local people helping those within their community who need support at times of difficulty.

How have you valued your membership?

I've valued working with a diverse and dedicated group of colleagues. It is always very rewarding to be able to address the immediate needs of people who are in financial or other difficulties.

What is the best thing about being a member of SVP?

The best thing about being in SVP is being able to provide practical support to families and individuals.

What are your hopes as Area President?

In North Down and Ards we are fortunate to have a good spread of Conferences and capable volunteers across the Area. My hope is that we can continue to meet the ever-growing demands for help and to continue to develop our relationships with other organisations in the Area in order to support our work in the community.

What would you say to someone who is considering becoming a member of SVP?

I would encourage people to consider joining SVP because:

- You get a better understanding of the needs within the local community and you get to know the geography of the area;
- You will meet and enjoy the company of a lot of new people with a wide range of skills and interests;
- You get a lot of satisfaction from being able to help people; and
- You get a better understanding of the resilience required to survive on very limited resources.

What is your favourite colour?

Blue

What is your favourite book?

The History of the World by J M Roberts

How do you relax?

I enjoy gardening, going to the gym, visiting our family in England and Wales and holidaying in Spain.

Tell us something unusual about yourself

I grew up on a farm in Tempo, Co Fermanagh and spent most of the summer holidays harvesting hay and turf in preparation for the next winter.

Spotlight On Area Presidents

Valerie McGreevy, West Belfast Area President



Valerie McGreevy is pictured with Lord Mayor of Belfast Cllr Tina Black during a reception for SVP members in The Lord Mayor's Parlour at Belfast City Hall.

What is the best thing about living in your Area?

It's rural, quiet and friendly and not too far from a village

When did you join SVP?

I joined SVP in 2015

Why did you join SVP?

A number of reasons; I had been doing voluntary work for 20 years but mostly with young people in care or in custody. When I retired I decided to have a change and as I have been very fortunate in my life I wanted to help those who haven't.

What was it about SVP's ethos that interested you?

It didn't require pieces of paper (qualifications), it was more interested in a caring, empathetic person.

How have you valued your membership?

Being a member of SVP has enabled me to give back to my community and to understand the issues people face every day. It has also allowed me to undertake tasks that I would never have thought I was capable of. It has enabled me to develop my personal skills.

What is the best thing about being a member of SVP?

I know I am valued and that I don't have to make decisions on my own, there is always someone to help with awkward situations.

What are your hopes as Area President?

I hope that I am fulfilling the role as I should. I hope that Conference Presidents know they can contact me about anything – if I don't know the answers I will find them. I hope that I can encourage others to join SVP.

What would you say to someone who is considering becoming a member of SVP?

I would say please do, you will find it fulfilling in helping others and you will develop skills you never knew you had.

What is your favourite colour?

Blue

What is your favourite book?

Probably 'A Long Road Winding' – it was my first adult book and I loved it. I passed it to my daughter for her first adult read and she loved it too. I love all John Grisham books.

How do you relax?

What's that? I like to walk, if I am sitting still I have to be doing something.

Tell us something unusual about yourself

I am nocturnal!

Spotlight On Area Presidents



Mairead Taggart, Omagh Area President

What is the best thing about living in your Area?

I live in the hills above Drumquin and love the views I waken up to each day.

When did you join SVP?

I joined St Patrick's SVP Conference in Drumquin in December 2014.

Why did you join SVP?

One Saturday night at mass, Fr Kevin Mullan asked for younger people to join the local SVP Conference. I went along and listened to what the Conference did locally and was amazed that I didn't know what help was available in the local Area.

The one question I was asked that night by one of the founding members of St Patrick's Conference Drumquin, the late Pat Scully (RIP), was "did I know that loneliness was a Poverty?" This thought provoking question has stayed with me and I still reflect on it during each visit.

What was it about SVP's ethos that interested you?

"Seek and find those who are in need". It is the one line that I have always carried with me when making people aware of SVP and what SVP does in the Area. At my first Area Conference Meeting as President, the meeting focused around seeking, finding and helping those in need.

How have you valued your membership?

Membership of SVP has been so important to me and I feel privileged to be able to be part of such a worthwhile charity. The role of Area President for Omagh Area

Conference gives me the opportunity to engage with so many members of the Society and assist them in meeting the needs of the entire Area.

My personal achievement has been coming from a small rural Conference to becoming a part of the Area Conference and now Area President. I feel very privileged to have been nominated and elected as the Area President as this is not something I ever imagined when I decided that I would become a volunteer within my local Conference.

What is the best thing about being a member of SVP?

Knowing that because SVP helped, a family will be warm and will eat. Quite often it is the things most of us take for granted that mean the most to those in need.

What are your hopes as Area President?

I hope to be able to help all eight Conferences and two Vincent's in the Omagh Area to go from strength to strength. I believe SVP needs to recruit new younger volunteers as these people will be the SVP of the future. I would like to be able to help with recruitment and retention of new volunteers.

What would you say to someone who is considering becoming a member of SVP?

Being an SVP volunteer is a humbling and worthwhile experience. You could join a Visiting Conference or volunteer in one of our shops.

What is your favourite colour?

Pink

What is your favourite book?

The Broken Fiddle by David A Dunlop

How do you relax?

Reading

Tell us something unusual about yourself

I have gone to the same island on holiday for the last 20 years and I go at least twice a year!

Regional Focus

SVP Members Celebrate 150 Years in Portadown

Members of St Vincent de Paul in Portadown joined together on the Feast Day of St Vincent de Paul to celebrate 150 years of dedicated service in the town.

At a special anniversary mass in St John the Baptist church, the congregation heard how their forefathers formed the local SVP Conference before electricity was invented, before families took inside toilets for granted, and of how they had lived through world wars and pandemics. Members of the present SVP Conference in Portadown were reminded that they are facing some similar challenges that members of SVP in the local area faced more than a century ago.



The sun shone on SVP members from Kilmegan and East Down Conferences on a visit to Knock.



SVP members gathered together in Tobar Mhuire Crossgar for their first retreat since the pandemic.

SVP Conference members from North Down and Ards attended a special Mass with Fr Martin O Hagan. Conference presidents joined with Ciara, Joseph and Austin, and St Vincent Paul Relic. Fr Martin invited the young people to hold the Relic and asked members to approach and touch it. SVP members enjoyed supper after Mass.



Banbridge PSNI Neighbourhood Team and the PSNI Catholic Police Guild were invited to St Colman's church for Mass. Those attending also celebrated the growing success of the ongoing referral scheme, a partnership between SVP and the PSNI in Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Policing District.

Businesses Support SVP Across the Region



North Down and Ards SVP Conferences received a donation of £400 from employees of Whale from a fundraising quiz held in Carnalea Golf Club. Liz Adams, HR Manager at Whale, said: "Our employees in Bangor, along with family and friends were delighted to be able to support this worthy cause supporting families in our local area, especially during this time of uncertainty within vulnerable communities. We are very proud of our employees who continually raise funds for those in need."

O'Neills Funeral Directors presented St Teresa's SVP Conference with a cheque for £875, collected in St Luke's church after their annual commemoration Mass for the deceased of the Parish.



Translink generously donated family summer attraction passes for distribution to families supported by SVP and The Salvation Army.





Niamh Mulholland, SVP Youth Development Officer, and Colin Calvert of Musgrave NI, are pictured with the donation of hand wash, disinfectant spray, wipes and hand cream from Musgrave NI, which owns the SuperValu, Centra and Mace retail brands.

Musgrave NI Director of Marketing Desi Derby said: "SVP helps many vulnerable people and families in communities across Northern Ireland, and as Musgrave's convenience retail brands also operate in the heart of these communities, we wanted to give our support by donating these products which we hope will help SVP continue its fantastic work."

Environmental Consulting Engineers donated an amazing £10,000 to the SVP Annual Golf Day in Omagh. The golf event also raised £2,500 to help local families who are requesting help locally from SVP. Staff of Environmental Consulting Engineers Patrick, Adam, Saoirse and Robert are pictured with Phil McKenna, SVP; Patrick McCaul, sponsor; and Marie McGrath, SVP Conference President.



Pauline Brown, SVP Regional Manager, met with staff at Argento who have raised £2,500 for SVP from sales of the jeweller's own brand, Karma. This is a new relationship and Karma jewellery is sold in all 23 of Argento's stores.



Sharon Gallagher of Moy Park presented Mary Waide, SVP Regional President for the North Region, and Henry O'Loan, SVP Area President for Mid Antrim, with £7,000 worth of food vouchers for distribution to families throughout the local Ballymena area.



Sports Clubs Support SVP

Agivey Cyclists chose SVP as the charity to benefit from their 'Tae in the Pot' event this year and presented Errigal SVP Conference with a cheque for £4,000. SVP Conference members supplied the tea and traybakes for the event.



Members of Fruithill Bowling Club presented St Teresa's SVP Conference with a cheque for £2,500 which was gratefully received to assist with helping people in the local community.



Kevin and Noel Coleman, and Aaron Cuskeran, called into Vincent's Magherafelt to hand over a cheque for £2,000 to shop manager Alanna and SVP members Eileen and Joan. The funds were raised by members of St Treas Ballymaguigan GCG who ran 5k every hour on the hour for 12 hours! Outstanding!



Councils Support SVP

Freedom Of The City Bestowed On SVP

Belfast City Council invited members of SVP in Belfast to a Reception hosted by Lord Mayor of Belfast Cllr Tina Black in recognition of the Society's work in the city and to celebrate the Society being awarded Freedom of the City. SVP Regional President for the North Region, Mary Waide, was also accompanied by SVP Regional Manager, Pauline Brown, to a special televised concert bestowing the Freedom of the City on the Society at Belfast's Waterfront Hall.





Newry, Mourne and Down District Digital Fundraiser

Rosemary Cunningham, SVP Area President for Newry and Mourne, joined representatives from local charities with the Council Chairperson, Cllr Michael Savage, to celebrate the success of the Council's digital campaign which gave the public the opportunity to make a donation directly via the Council's website to help local families this winter.

Councils Celebrate St Vincent de Paul

Council buildings across the Region were illuminated to honour St Vincent de Paul Day on 27 September. These included:

Antrim and Newtownabbey:

Antrim Civic Centre, Mossley Mill and Ballyclare Town Hall clockface

Ards and North Down:

Ards Town Hall

Causeway Coast and Glens:

Cloonavin

Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon:

Armagh Gaol, Armagh Palace, Old Town Hall Banbridge and Craigavon Civic Centre

Derry City and Strabane:

Council Offices, Strand Road, Derry

Fermanagh and Omagh:

Enniskillen Castle, Enniskillen and Strule Arts Centre, Omagh



Mid Ulster:

Ranfurly House, Dungannon; Burnavon, Cookstown; Bridewell, Magherafelt

Newry, Mourne and Down:

Down Leisure Centre, Downpatrick and Newry Town Hall, Newry

SVP Members Invited to Special Receptions

SVP members were invited to special receptions hosted by the Mayor of Mid and East Antrim Council and the Mayor of Causeway Coast and Glens Council to celebrate St Vincent de Paul Day and recognise the work of SVP locally.

SVP Celebrates Christmas



SVP



The Annual Appeal was launched this year with the help of television presenter Eamonn Holmes and Northern Ireland's queen of comedy, May McFettridge.



SVP was receiving in excess of 2,000 requests for help a week in towns, cities and villages across the country and the Appeal, entitled "Impossible Choices", aimed to help meet basic family needs of the thousands who were clearly struggling, despite the promises of additional cost of living support payments being made by the government.

Launching the Appeal, Mary Waide, SVP Regional President for the North Region, said: "Last year was sadly record-breaking with 191,000 requests for help received at our national and regional offices. Unfortunately that figure looks likely to be exceeded this year with 168,000 requests already received across the island to the end of October, a 19% increase on the same time in 2021.

"We are very worried that many families will continue to struggle into next year. In the coming months the cost of living crisis will hit different households in different ways, particularly with the rising costs of food, energy and housing. Add in the cost of celebrating Christmas and you can see how difficult life is going to be for those on fixed incomes, whether that income comes from government benefits or from low-paid employment.

"Those hardest hit will include one parent-families, low income workers, low-income households in rural areas, the unemployed, those who are retired or people living with disabilities and their carers. The most vulnerable in our communities are all facing impossible choices this Christmas which will undoubtedly stretch into the new year. That is why we are seeking donations to help families pay for food to put on the table, heat their homes and ensure their children enjoy the magic of Christmas.

"We are appealing to people to please donate whatever they can spare to help SVP give the gift of choice this Christmas."

Cookstown Celebrations

SVP members in Cookstown celebrated the festive season with dinner at the Glenavon Hotel. This was the first opportunity for members to enjoy Christmas dinner together since the pandemic.



Christmas Comes to Care Homes

As well as providing vouchers for local families this Christmas, Newcastle SVP Conference made donations to local care homes, reinforcing the message that nobody should wake up to an empty Christmas.

Members of St Colman's SVP Conference delivered Christmas gifts to residents at Slieve Roe and Brooklands care homes in Kilkeel.



Support for St Canice SVP Conference

St Canice SVP Conference in Limavady was grateful for the generosity of local organisations and schools throughout the year and especially at Christmas. Donations were received from St Mary's Parish Parishioners, The Rotary Club of Limavady, St Mary's Limavady, Rossmar School, Limavady Wolfhounds GAC and Castlerock Golf Club. The Conference also worked closely with The Salvation Army to ensure local families enjoyed a special Christmas.



Sports Clubs Support SVP at Christmas

#SaffronAid

The return of the hugely popular Antrim GAA #SaffronAid Christmas Appeal could not have come at a better time as SVP was receiving in excess of 2,000 requests for help a week in towns, cities and villages across the country. Speaking about the fundraiser, Antrim GAA Public Relations Officer, Dan McConnell, said: "This year more than ever we feel that it is really important to help those facing difficult choices in our local clubs and communities. We're asking those across the county to get behind the return of #SaffronAid this year and raise funds to purchase vouchers which can then be distributed locally for food, fuel and Christmas gifts by St Vincent de Paul volunteers."



Cliftonville FC

SVP Regional Manager, Pauline Brown, was proud to meet the players of Cliftonville FC to receive a cheque for £200 and £50 vouchers for the Annual Appeal.



Businesses Support SVP at Christmas

We received generous donations from a range of organisations including:

SEHSCT
Grow Consultancy
Mackle Foods
Skinworks
Sozo
St John's Ambulance

Woodvale Construction Company continues to support SVP Omagh with another extremely generous £2,000 donation. Pictured are: Yvonne Conway, Woodvale Construction Company; Phil McKenna, SVP Omagh; Yvonne Scott, Woodvale Construction Company; and Alex McKinley of Air Ambulance, who also received a donation from Woodvale. Yvonne Scott, Woodvale Construction, who made the presentation, said: "Amid the cost of living crisis, we feel it appropriate to support local charities in lieu of corporate gifts this year."



Mark McMullan and Stephen McQuillan of McQuillan Companies are pictured with Pauline Brown, SVP Regional Manager. The fourth generation family business donated £2,500 to SVP to support families faced with impossible choices this winter.



Members of SVP Ahoghill received a generous donation from Patrick Dougan, PCD Contracts Ahoghill, to support the work of SVP locally this Christmas.



SVP is grateful for the very generous donation of £10,000 from local company Evermore, to assist with the work of SVP in Derry. Pictured are Judith McColgan of Evermore and Ella McCallion of SVP.



SVP Regional Manager, Pauline Brown, collected £39,000 worth of vouchers from SuperValu as part of a donation of oil and vouchers made possible by followers of Digg Mama's Digg Deep campaign.



Entertaining Families At Christmas

Movie House owner Michael McAdam made a donation of 150 family vouchers to Mary Waide, SVP Regional President for the North Region, to be distributed to families at Christmas. They could be redeemed in any Movie House location, Cityside, Belfast; Coleraine; Glengormley or Maghera.

Hillmount Garden Centre invited families to see Santa and family tickets for movies, shows and pantomimes in Roe Valley Arts & Cultural Centre, Limavady; Lyric Theatre, Belfast; Riverside Theatre, Coleraine; and Strand Arts Centre, Belfast; were gratefully received.



FAMILY APPEAL

The joint Family Appeal with The Salvation Army, now in its 43rd year, received support from a number of organisations including Chartered Accountants in Ireland and Cybersource.



Education Authority

Barry Mulholland, Chair of the Board, and Matthew McDermott, Assistant Director of HR and Corporate Services, joined with SVP and The Salvation Army to launch the Education Authority appeal, now in its fourth year.

Stuff A Bus

Translink joined with U105 and Belfast Live to deliver its Stuff A Bus campaign. This year's total exceeded the target of £75,000 which was reached by donations from listeners of U105 and readers of Belfast Live.



Mary Waide, SVP Regional President for the North Region, spoke at the Northern Ireland Assembly Carol Service and thanked staff for their support of the Family Appeal. Mary and Pauline Brown, SVP Regional Manager, had the honour of collecting donations of cash and vouchers from The Speaker of Northern Ireland Assembly, Alex Maskey MLA. NI Assembly staff raised £2,500 for the Family Appeal.



Kind hearted ladies from the Women's Institute took up their knitting needles to create colourful hats and scarves for the Family Appeal. As well as benefiting those who received the winter warmers, the ladies who took up their needles were delighted to be knitting again as they found it therapeutic and said it assisted with their own mental health.



Staff at Dept of Infrastructure enjoyed a Christmas Quiz and wore their Christmas jumpers to work while raising funds for the Family Appeal. SVP's Thomas Reilly visited those who took part in the quiz to collect their generous donation.



The Santa Train took happy families from SVP and The Salvation Army on a truly memorable journey from Belfast to Whitehead and a very special passenger called Santa was on board to meet the children!



Giving Tree Appeal

Department for Communities Permanent Secretary, Colum Boyle, is pictured launching the SVP and Belfast Central Mission joint Giving Tree Appeal which has been raising funds for families across Northern Ireland at Christmas for more than 20 years.



Sean Kelly Praised for Christmas Fundraising



#SaffronAid was the brainchild of Sean Kelly, Finance & Marketing Manager at PA Duffy & Co Solicitors, during his time as Antrim GAA PRO.

Before the pandemic, he encouraged big hearted GAA clubs across Co Antrim to spread seasonal cheer to some of the most vulnerable families through a shoebox appeal and trolley dash in aid of St Vincent de Paul. He is currently Antrim GAA Ulster delegate and mobilised Gaels throughout the county to back the Saffron shoebox appeal which started in 2016 with the assistance of Sinead Steele, #SaffronAid Co-ordinator, enabling SVP to distribute thousands of gifts over the years.

Mary Waide, SVP Regional President for the North Region, said: "Over the past five years we have been overwhelmed by the generosity of Co Antrim GAA in supporting St Vincent de Paul's Annual Appeal. I want to pay tribute to Sean Kelly as, without his enthusiasm, #SaffronAid would most certainly not be the huge success it is today. Fundraisers like Sean are invaluable to charities like SVP in helping us deliver assistance to those who need it most in the heart of our local communities."

The Difference SVP Makes

Just a note to say I've been a recipient of your services in Ballymena. On the first occasion, it was Rosemary and Henry who visited. They both kept in touch and last Christmas it was Rosemary. Reaching out in the first place was really hard for me but Rosemary and Henry couldn't have been less judgemental and more kind and, to be honest, that kind of understanding is as helpful and needed as much as anything else. It's a lovely thing to know there are such kind volunteers taking their time out to help people.

Thank you.

Thanks

Hello there, I would just like to thank everyone who helped me and my son today. Tonight we had a nice meal from the food hamper. Thank you for the box of biscuits that was a real treat - felt like Christmas time. We have gas and electric and we are thankful for the toiletry items. Recent poverty has hit us both hard from domestic violence, fleeing to Women's Aid refuge and finally being rehomed. We have both had to start from scratch and walked away on the night in question with the clothes on our back and four small bags. It's hard and lonely having to do the new house up from scratch and on my own with no help. We may have concrete floors and no blinds but we have a roof over our head. We will get there one day at a time but at least we have food for the next week and gas and electric. Your work is invaluable thank you so much from my 13 year old son and I.

I am back to say a word of appreciation on behalf of my family and myself, one of the volunteers called me yesterday 12/04/2022 to announce to me the gifts authorised for us, I got the vouchers today 13/04/2022. Six gift vouchers of £10 each for electricity and gas plus one gift voucher of £20 for groceries. Total was £80 worth of gift vouchers, trust me sir this was a breakthrough, I ask God to bless you and the entire team, I am deeply grateful God bless you.

Hello, I just wanted to thank you for your help, you have all been so good to me and my family. I spoke to your member down the street the other day and we chatted for a while, I thanked them for what they had done to help me, they told me that it wasn't much and that was what you are there for. When I came home I thought about what he had said and I thought that I should tell you what my life was like before you helped me.

Because of my disability I wasn't able to rear my children the way I would have liked and the way I planned when me and my husband were married. They were suffering with school because I was in so much pain that I couldn't stay awake to help them with homework and I know they didn't have everything they needed at school, I made them different. I still remember the day that I called you all those years ago when my daughter had come home from school crying because some of the girls were making fun of her uniform because it had some small holes in it, I felt so low, I felt ashamed that I had not been able to afford a new jumper and was too sick to sew her clothes. The tears in her eyes caused me to burst into tears, I was totally lost.

I knew that you helped people but because my husband was working I didn't want to ask you for help, especially as everyone knew he drank heavily. But I couldn't see my wee girl cry again. When I phoned you for the first time, all I could say was my name before I started to cry, I just couldn't talk, I hung up the phone and just cried for the next half hour, up until I heard the door knock. When I answered it there you were, I was so embarrassed, I didn't ever have visitors to my house, the room was a mess and the five children with clothes and toys all over the seats, I started to apologise for the mess but before I could finish the lady remarked how beautiful the curtains were, I appreciated that so much, you ignored the mess and lifted my spirits instantly.

The elderly member started talking to my kids and it gave me time to explain my problems to the lady, I said how I hated asking because my husband worked but drank his money, but I loved him. The lady just told me not to worry about that, we have all things that we have no control over. That night you left me and arrived back a short time later with food and arranged to get all my children the uniform items they needed including coats which only one of them had.

You know all that you have done for me since that day, the food, heat, toys, help with college. I'm so happy that my children have all left school with good educations, all of them working now.

Two things that none of you know but I want to tell you now because of what your member said "it wasn't much". Your member was doing what you have always done, making me feel good and playing down your work but you all need to know.

The first thing I want you to all know is that on the night I hung up the phone I had decided to put my

children to bed and swallow all my pills certainly enough to ensure I never woke up. I felt my children would be better with someone else and that my life wasn't worth living because I had done such a bad job looking after them. Your knock on my door stopped that.

The second thing I want to say is that when my daughter was getting married and I was hugging her before her wedding she told me she loved me and that she was so proud of me. We talked for a wee while and I told her I had been terrible as a mum, I talked about some of the real bad times but she told me I was being silly, she told me she was so proud of me because of the way I had done all I could for her and the rest of them.

She said she only remembered the good times like when we went to beach and outside swimming pool for a holiday, that was one of the times that you paid for us to go to Newcastle.

So, the second thing you gave me was to be able to let me see my daughter getting married and hearing that she was proud of me. Your knock on the door did that.

I will never forget all the kindness that you have always shown me, you are all my special friends, I say a prayer for you all every night, I love you all from the bottom of my heart. God bless you all.



A word of encouragement from Claire McCollum

As a presenter on BBC Songs of Praise, I am in the privileged position of meeting people from all walks of life who place great importance on how God is working in their life and tell me their life stories and journeys of faith for sharing with viewers of the programme.

I am always struck by the humility of people who go the extra mile to help others and by those who seek no reward or special treatment because they have chosen to dedicate their lives to volunteering to make others' lives better or their situations easier.

Over the years I have witnessed the invaluable work of SVP in local communities across Northern Ireland. The passion with which SVP members and volunteers approach delicate and sensitive situations is such an inspiration and providing people with help and support while maintaining their dignity is just so important in this world in which we live.

I would commend you on your commitment to continuing to serve your neighbours and the most vulnerable families around us as they struggle with rising costs.

Keep up the good work!





Retail

Our Vincent's charity shops are a very important aspect of the service SVP provides.

They provide customers with clothing and day-to-day goods at affordable prices, promote a friendly and respectful approach to all customers, a signposting service to help available for those in need and generate an income source for the Society. We are at the forefront of the reuse and recycling of clothing and goods.

The Northern Regional Retail Committee is established and authorised by the North Regional Council and Board of the Society. Our role is to advise, recommend and seek approval for matters relating to the retail operations of SVP and to ensure that the Society's retail activities, to include Shops, Order Fulfilment Centres and Transport, are appropriately managed through adequate oversight.

Retail structures under the remit of the Regional Committee include Regional Retail Units, Local Conference Retail Committees, Area Retail Units, Clusters of Retail Units and all Order Fulfilment Centres and Transport.

Anne McLarnon, Chair of Northern Regional Retail Committee, is pictured on the right, with Anne Irwin, Mary Waide and Terry Sharpe, at the opening of Vincent's on Springfield Road, Belfast.




The Committee will provide expertise and have a review, evaluation and oversight role on all matters relating to retail operations of SVP within the North, [as contained in the most recent National Retail Strategy approved by National Management Council on 24 April 2021].

The Committee advises the Regional Council/ Board in relation to implementation, progress, and adherence with the National Retail Strategy 2021-2025.

In July 2022 a new Committee was formed, composed of Conference members of the Society. I was appointed Northern Retail Representative by Mary Waide, SVP Regional President for the North Region. The members of the Committee are Anne Marie Hughes [Secretary] and Mairead Taggart, Omagh; Eugene Graffin, Cushendall; Dominic Burke, Derry; and Sarah Watkiss, North Belfast. The Committee is supported by the Regional President, Regional Treasurer and Accountant and the Regional HR. The Regional Retail Manager reports to, advises and works closely with, the Retail Committee.

Our current priorities are to support all shops in being the best they can be, establish RACI in the North Region, ensure access to vans and van drivers where needed and establish ethical recycling throughout all our shops.


Anne McLarnon,
Chair of Northern Regional Retail Committee



2022 was an extremely busy year for the shops in North Region. Sales alone amounted to £1.96 million and with recycling income added to this, it will pass £2 million.



Springfield Road opened in June although a manager wasn't appointed until October: right in time for the busy pre Christmas Peak.



Ballymote relocated to a larger unit within the centre, providing more retail space and a safer back of house area for the team.



There was a small number of permanent closures of shops: Turf Lodge and Coalisland never recovered post Covid, and Dungannon closed in June.

Springfield Road Officially Opens

Vincent's on Springfield Road has been officially opened by local celebrity, 101 year old Terry Sharpe!

Terry's dad Albert rose to fame alongside Sean Connery when he played Darby O'Gill in the 1959 Disney movie Darby O'Gill and the Little People.

He is pictured here with his sons and Mary Waide, SVP Regional President for the North Region.



Tracy Purcell has been appointed Manager of Vincent's Springfield Road



Annual National Retail Conference

The Annual National Retail Conference made its way to Derry in June. Shops were represented by managers, volunteers and members from every region.



The captivated audience was treated to inspirational presentations from Richard Moore, Children in Crossfire; and Dave Barringer, SVP USA. The most poignant presentation came from our very own Lucy O'Kane, Volunteer, Vincent's Magherafelt. Lucy told us her Vincent's story, why she started volunteering and what keeps her coming back and tackling those never ending bags of donations. There was hardly a dry eye in the room!

At the evening's Awards Ceremony, the North Region was recognised and won in a number of categories.

Congratulations to:



Volunteer of the Year: Molly Murphy (posthumously).



Highest Growth during Olympics: Newcastle.



Window Competition: Kircubbin.



Team of the Year: Cushendall.

Spotlight On Vincent's Volunteer - Lucy O'Kane, Magherafelt

Lucy's story as told at the
Annual National Retail Conference

*"From what we earn we can make a living:
from what we give however makes a life"*

When I started with Vincent's 8 years ago, I had no idea of the direction it would take me. I was unemployed due to my illness, I felt isolated, and my self esteem had hit an all time low, for the first time in my life, I was lost. I was brought up to always work hard so I always put huge pressure on myself. Trying to prove that every hour of every day I was worthwhile and good at my job. I did this while always feeling worried that my boss and my colleagues would see the real me, lacking in confidence. I felt I could never relax at work; I was always on high alert and eventually I reached a complete burnout after 25 years of this.

So, I, my body, and my mind, were all telling me enough was enough. I was forced to re-evaluate my life. My support worker suggested volunteering, and after a few suggestions I decided to volunteer at Vincent's. I always loved going to charity shops, on the lookout for unique clothes, jewellery etc. My dad was also called Vincent and, because I was aware of the great work Vincent's do for the local community, I decided to give them a go.

On my first day, I was so nervous. However, the manager was so lovely and easy to talk to and I began to feel at ease. I looked forward to learning new skills and offering my own skills. I loved socialising with customers and helping them, I began to feel alive again.



My confidence within myself grew and grew, there was no pressure and therefore I didn't put any pressure on myself.

I could work as little or as many hours as I wanted and depending on how I felt on any given day. My manager valued me and my new ideas I had for the shop. She said I had a "good eye" for things and I felt great about doing something good and giving back to society.

I took it one day at a time, and here we are 8 years later!

I have been asked many times, "how can you work without pay?". Don't get me wrong, it is hard being on benefits and I do struggle sometimes but now I put my health first and value myself a lot more and I realise material things can't compensate for bad health.

Volunteering has enriched my life so much; top of the list is being able to be myself. I have met great friends and we are all equal, we support each other through good times and bad.

I have been there through three shop moves and we are all a great team. Our manager Alanna always says, "There is no 'I' in team". She is so positive, friendly, and enthusiastic, and it rubs off on all of us.

I can truly say I love working at Vincent's and long may that continue. It has shown me how to declutter my life and of course my wardrobe, of which 95% is from Vincent's!

We have so many laughs at work too, for example, I modelled at one of our fashion shows, I was doing great until I fell on the catwalk, I was dancing and trying to get the crowd going. I never got up as quick in all my life and then I just kept going. Everyone clapped and I saw the funny side of it, our fashion show was a great success!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the entire team in Magherafelt for their unwavering support to me over the years, and of course, Anne Crossan, our Regional Retail Manager, for her hard work and dedication.

Now, lastly, I started with a quote and I would like to end with one:

"Use your voice for kindness, your ears for compassion, your mind for truth and your heart for love"



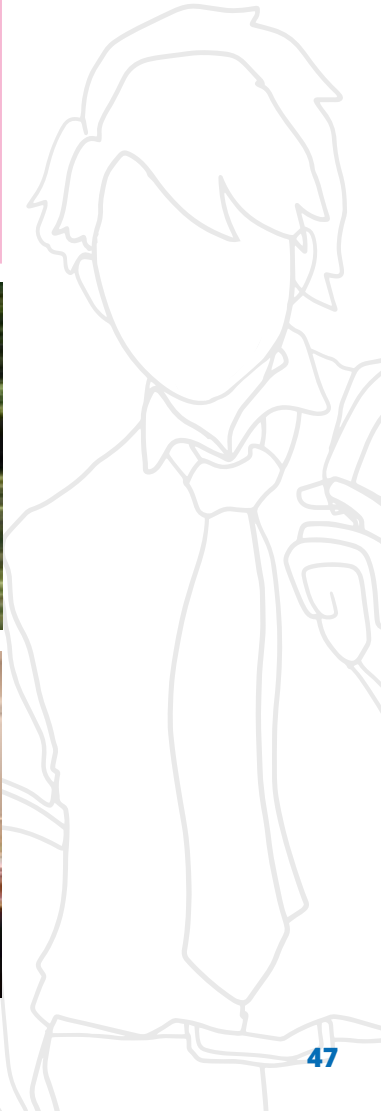
Fashion Shows

Killyclogher

2022 brought the much anticipated return of social events and two of the shops couldn't wait to show off the quality products available in store! Killyclogher hosted a fashion show in the Killyclogher Inn with local celebrity, James McGinn, taking on the role of MC, and Cushendall joined in the fun of the Heart of the Glens festival by hosting a fashion show and afternoon tea. Not only did the team put together a fashion show worthy of Paris, but they made the cake stands used for the treats. These were then sold in the shop.



Cushendall



Window Displays

What's the best thing about Christmas in retail? The window displays of course!

We had some award winning window displays in the Region including Cushendall which won first prize in the Causeway Coast and Glens Council competition.

Irish Street Downpatrick came second in their local competition.

Being part of SVP though it was very evident this year that Christmas isn't tinsel and sparkles for everyone. Portadown used their two windows to show the difference for some people. One window was the picture story book idea of Christmas whilst the other, unfortunately, showed the reality for some people.



Diamond Volunteers

Vincent's Armagh is celebrating an incredible 30 years of service by Pauline McRory and Bernadette Smith who have received their diamond certificate of appreciation. Congratulations ladies and thank you for your continued commitment!



Vibrant Volunteers

Vincent's Volunteers are a vibrant bunch and their enthusiasm is palpable. I would just like to say a heartfelt thank you to each and every one of them for their commitment and dedication.

Anne Crossan,
Regional Retail Manager



Peaks Campaign

As with previous years, the shop teams used the busy pre Christmas Peak to put all their creativity and enthusiasm into practice.

There was a wide range of activities across the Region including targeted promotions and customer loyalty cards. With the impact of the cost of living crisis being felt by everyone, Vincent's wanted to help take the pressure off our customers and still provide that top level service people expect and deserve.



Award for Magherafelt Manager

Alanna has been Manager of Vincent's Magherafelt for three years and during that time has worked closely with the team of volunteers and SVP members to relocate the shop and firmly establish it as a 'must visit' shop in Magherafelt.

Wishing to continue her development as a Manager, Alanna signed up for a level three management course co-ordinated by Rutledge.

We are delighted to see Alanna's hard work pay off as she not only completed the course and gained a new qualification but she also won Apprentice of the Year.

Congratulations on your achievement Alanna!



Impressive Visits to Vincent's

Visiting members Paddy O'Flynn from South West Region and Kieron Madden from South East Region visited Antrim Road and Springfield Road Vincent's while they were in the North for a meeting with members of the Board and the Retail Committee.

We understand they were both suitably impressed by both the shops and their teams and are grateful for the work they do for their local communities. Congratulations to all involved!



Golden Visit for Cushendall

Store manager Seana Lynn welcomed Olympic Medallist Michael McKillop when he generously donated items to the shop – thank you!



Corporate Volunteers Welcome

We would like to thank enthusiastic volunteers from Power NI who helped get Vincent's Springfield Road ready for its official opening!

For more information on corporate volunteering, please email anne.crossan@svpni.co.uk



Your Local Vincent's



Armagh

46/48 Scotch Street, Armagh,
BT61 7DF
T: 028 3778 8040
E: armagh.vincents@svpni.co.uk

Ballymena

11 Cushendall Road, Ballymena,
BT43 6HA
T: 028 2564 4122
E: ballymena.vincents@svpni.co.uk

Banbridge

5 Jingers Court, Banbridge,
BT32 3YJ
T: 028 4066 2047

Belfast

196/200 Antrim Road,
BT15 2AJ
T: 028 9075 2648
E: antrimrd.vincents@svpni.co.uk

Belfast

138 Ormeau Road, Belfast,
BT7 2EB
T: 028 9032 5885
E: ormeaurd.vincents@svpni.co.uk

Belfast

45/47 Rosemary Street, Belfast,
BT1 1QB
T: 028 9031 0255
E: antrimrd.vincents@svpni.co.uk

Belfast

98 Springfield Road, Belfast,
BT12 7AH
T: 028 9090 7696
E: springfieldrd.vincents@svpni.co.uk

Cookstown

35 Loy Street, Cookstown,
BT80 8PZ
T: 028 8676 9400
E: cookstown.vincents@svpni.co.uk

Cushendall

7 Dalriada Avenue, Cushendall,
BT44 0NB
T: 028 9443 8523
E: cushendall.vincents@svpni.co.uk

Dairy Farm

Unit W3, Dairy Farm Centre,
Stewartstown Road, Dunmurry,
BT17 0AW
T: 028 9060 4372
E: dunmurry.vincents@svpni.co.uk

Derry

34 William Street, Derry, BT48 6ET
T: 028 7126 8325
E: williamstderry.vincents@svpni.co.uk

Downpatrick

Unit 5, Ballymote Centre,
40 Killough Road, Downpatrick, BT30 6PY
T: 028 4461 3717
E: ballymotedownpatrick.vincents@svpni.co.uk

Downpatrick

14 Irish Street, Downpatrick,
BT30 6BP
T: 028 4461 4194
E: irishstdownpatrick.vincent@svpni.co.uk

Dungiven

447 Ballyquin Road, Dungiven,
BT47 4LX
T: 028 7774 0714
E: dungiven.vincent@svpni.co.uk

Enniskillen

24 Church Street, Enniskillen,
BT74 7EJ
T: 028 6632 9893
E: enniskillen.vincent@svpni.co.uk

Keady

39 Kinelowen Street, Keady,
BT60 3ST
T: 028 3778 8010
E: keady.vincent@svpni.co.uk

Killyclogher

72 Circular Road, Omagh,
BT79 7HA
T: 028 8224 9251
E: killyclogher.vincent@svpni.co.uk

Kilrea

52 Maghera Street, Kilrea,
BT51 5QN
T: 028 2954 0103
E: kilrea.vincent@svpni.co.uk

Kircubbin

63 Main Street, Kircubbin,
BT22 2SR
T: 028 4273 8075
E: kircubbin.vincent@svpni.co.uk

Lisnaskea

132 Main Street, Lisnaskea,
BT92 0JB
T: 028 67721906

Lurgan

14/16 William Street, Lurgan,
BT66 6JA
T: 028 3832 5725
E: lurgan.vincent@svpni.co.uk

Magherafelt

12 King Street, Magherafelt,
BT45 6AR
T: 028 7932 8088
E: magherafelt.vincent@svpni.co.uk

Moyraverty

Unit 10/11 Moyraverty Centre,
Craigavon, BT65 5HX
T: 028 3834 4881

Newcastle

76 Main Street, Newcastle,
BT33 0AD
T: 028 4372 4008
E: newcastle.vincent@svpni.co.uk

Newry

40a Bridge Street, Newry,
BT35 8AF
T: 028 3026 8185
E: bridgestnewry.vincent@svpni.co.uk

Newry

30 Mill Street, Newry,
BT34 1EY
T: 028 3026 7590
E: millstnewry.vincent@svpni.co.uk

Omagh

43 Castle Street, Omagh,
BT78 1DD
T: 028 8225 2000
E: omagh.vincent@svpni.co.uk

Portadown

Unit 2/3 Mayfair BC,
193/205 Garvaghy Road, Portadown,
BT62 1EH
T: 028 3839 3898
E: portadown.vincent@svpni.co.uk

Strabane

18 Barrack Street, Strabane,
BT82 8HG
T: 028 7188 4479
E: strabane.vincent@svpni.co.uk

Tullygally

Unit 3/4 Tullygally Shopping Centre,
Craigavon, BT65 5AU
T: 028 3834 1513
E: tullygally.vincent@svpni.co.uk

Membership

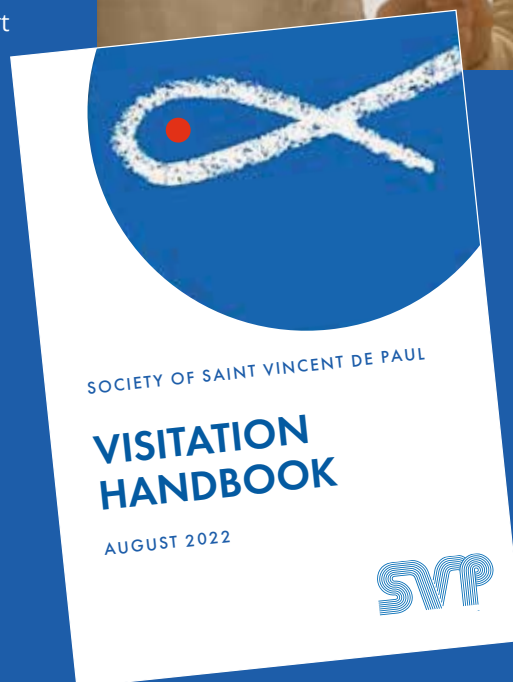
Visitation Handbook Launched in August 2022

A newly updated Handbook was issued to all members to set out member roles, best practice and guidance for visitation. In the spirit of Vincentian fraternity, it shares experiences from SVP Conferences and makes clear our responsibilities as members assisting and supporting people in Ireland.

The contents show the diverse nature of visitation work and our responsibility to seek guidance when we need it. Demonstrating our commitment to best practice, the handbook was designed to offer appropriate support when the need arises.

Circulated at a time when many individuals and families are facing great hardship, emerging from two years of Covid lockdowns, inflation, housing crisis and overwhelming pressure on public health services, the need for SVP support couldn't be greater.

Reaching out to people in need SVP members make a difference to the people we assist. The cornerstones of quality visitation present many challenges. Conducting home visits in line with best practice ensures confidentiality, promotes dignity and focuses on building self-sufficiency.



SVP Quality Visitation and Assessment of Need

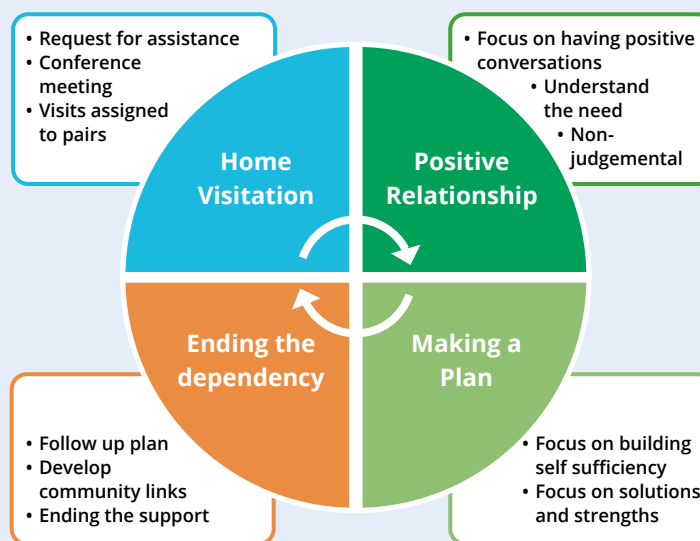
Introduction

How we make a difference to the people we assist is the core work of SVP. The cornerstones of quality visitation present many different challenges for this work. At the SVP National Council meeting in May 2015, the following areas were identified as most important to the work of Visitation Conferences:

Quality Visitation

- Assessing the need of the people we visit more effectively
- The importance of having a non-judgemental attitude
- The importance of actively listening during the visit
- The need to give time to the family and to express empathy
- The need to have an external knowledge of services
- The importance of having different skills within the membership of the Conference
- The effective pairing of members is necessary to ensure quality visitation
- The need to refer some people we assist on to other support services is crucial in helping to end dependency
- The need for quality case management to track the type of interventions clients receive to ensure consistency is equally important in visitation work
- Understanding the importance for people in need but also the limits of confidentiality.

Conducting Home Visitation



Prior to the Visit

- Prepare as much as possible using the SVP Assessment of Need form
- Give notice of your intention to visit (where practical)
- Conduct visit at an appropriate time
- Have the authority of the Conference to visit (no solo runs)
- Visits should be conducted in the home except in exceptional circumstances where visits may take place in a neutral public venue with some privacy
- Clinics are not an appropriate venue for visits.

St Vincent de Paul Annual Members' Day Returns

After almost three years, our members reconnected at a Regional event which took place in Armagh City Hotel on Saturday 1 October 2022.

Mary Waide, SVP Regional President for the North Region, hosted our first Regional Members' Day since the beginning of the pandemic to discuss rising hardships in Northern Ireland communities.

Attended by 100 members, the event began with a Spiritual Reflection by the Society's Spiritual Advisor Fr Perry and addressed everything from the rising cost of energy and food to the expected impossible choices families would be faced with at Christmas.

In her opening remarks, Mary said: "It is wonderful to have so many members attending this Members' Day after a very demanding two years.

"Everyone works better as a team and this Members' Day provides us with an opportunity to join together for fellowship and to encourage and support one another. I believe our members have reaffirmed their commitment to the Society and are engaged about the job ahead. We are focused on the Society's ethos of serving those who need our help the most as we face this current crisis.

"There is a real consciousness and sense among those attending that we will certainly have a tough winter to contend with, with more people to support as the current economic situation is felt by a wider demographic. With this in mind, we are also seeking more members and volunteers to help us carry out





**Society of St Vincent de Paul
Regional Members' Day 2022**

Supporting One Another



**Saturday 1 October 2022
Armagh City Hotel**

Regional Members' Day

1 October 2022

Programme

- 10.00 – 10.30 Registration & Refreshments
- 10.30 – 10.45 Welcome & Opening Remarks
Mary Waide, Regional President
- 10.45 – 11.00 Opening Prayers and Spiritual Reflection
Fr Perry, Spiritual Director
- 11.00 – 11.15 Supporting One Another
Rose McGowan, National President
- 11.15 – 1.00 "The Price is Right" – Anne Irwin, Regional
Vice President
- Interactive discussions and conversations on
the cost of living
- 1.00 - 2.15 **Lunch & Opportunity to Network**

(Please take the opportunity to visit our information stands)

- 2.15 – 3.00 Reaching out into our communities
Michael Higgins, National Member Support
Manager
- 3.00 – 3.45 Commissioning Ceremony & Reflection
The Tree of Life
Fr Perry Gildea
- 3.45 – 4.00 Comfort Break
- 4.00 – 4.15 Communication & Christmas
Linda O'Connell, National Online & Media
Co-ordinator
- 4.15 – 4.45 Q & A Session – Panel from Regional Board
- 4.45 – 5.00 Closing Remarks - Mary Waide
- 5.00 Closing Prayers – Fr Perry Gildea
- 5.15 Vigil Mass of
Sunday 2 October 2022

Refreshments will be available after Mass

Please note that timings are approximate and may be subject to change



Visitation Prayer

Lord I give you my mind that I may
think as you think
My eyes that I may see as you see
My ears that I may hear as you hear
My tongue that I may speak
as you speak
Lord, above all may I be charitable
in all that I do and say
And may the Holy Spirit
inspire, guide and assist
me during the visit
Amen

what we know will be an increased demand on our very dedicated volunteers."

Rose McGowan, SVP National President, was guest of honour and Rose, in her address, said: "It is important that SVP members in the North Region know that we support you wholeheartedly in the invaluable work that you do in your local communities throughout this Region. I am conscious that you will be visiting homes where the mother is putting her children's needs before her own. Where your time, empathy and listening ear will meet the need. It is you who enable those you support to say that you listened, that they felt relieved and that you

helped them feel they could sleep better. For that, and for the friendship you offer, I say 'thank you'. Offering a little help at the right time can give people hope for the future. Sharing your time and skills will ultimately change lives forever."

There was great interaction among all of the members and staff in attendance.

Practical exercises on assessing need, cost of living prices and sharing of information on new member recruitment were insightful and engaging!

The feedback from everyone was very positive!



Area Gatherings Across the Region

Area Gatherings returned in earnest this year after the pandemic and members enthusiastically attended Area Gatherings across the Region

Armagh & Craigavon





Derry





East Down & Kilmegan



Fermanagh



Mid & East Antrim





Newry & Mourne and Armagh & Craigavon





North Derry





North Down & Ards



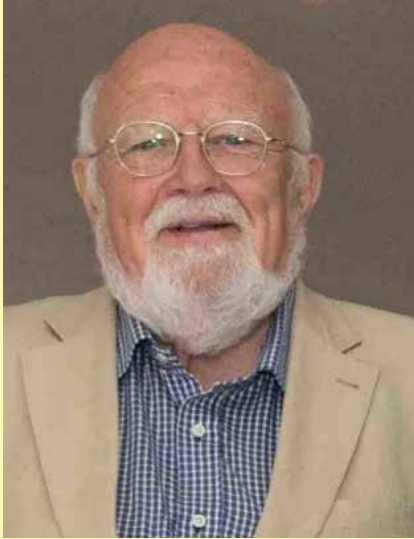
Omagh



Strabane



Spotlight On SVP Member Dominic Burke



I joined SVP in 1964, the Blessed Virgin Conference in Ballymena. Pat McHugh was a younger member and asked me to come to the Sunday meeting. At that meeting I met the other members and was given the Blue Manual and was told by the Secretary I would be asked questions on “The Rule” in a month’s time.

After 4 weeks I approached the Secretary and asked when he would be asking the questions. He started laughing and said “I was only joking”. It meant that I had learnt “The Rule” and read the early writings of Society’s Members.

Today I am a member of St Eugene’s Conference in Derry and Area Vice-President.

Membership of the Society has been very important to me. After joining I had the opportunity to become a member of the National Youth Committee of Ireland and attended International meetings in Ireland in 1965, Assisi 1967 and Lisbon 1969. I chaired the Down & Connor Youth Committee and was a member of that Diocesan Council.

Being a member enables me, with my fellow members, to meet the needs of people in our Parish.

The most significant change in the Society in my time has been women joining. This has brought a greater understanding of the pressures that families experience.

I also believe we are now a more professional voluntary organisation with training and development opportunities, which include online modules and face to face training, for new and existing members. The Society continues to be very relevant today. All the Conferences in the Derry Area Council are experiencing increasing demands for electricity, gas and food. We also receive many requests for furniture, clothing and household goods, which can be met in our local Vincent’s Shop. The demands are only likely to increase in the current economic environment.

There have been many highlights during my time as a member, attending meetings both Regional and National has enabled me to meet members and learn more about the Vincentian family. Some 30 years ago I had the opportunity with Dr Kevin McCoy to visit Ghana, one of our twinned countries and see there the impact that twinning was having in and around Accra. It was certainly a great experience.

In order for the Society to remain relevant I believe it is necessary for the Society to have effective communication between Conferences and at all levels. So that we are planning and preparing to meet the changing needs.

SVP Safeguarding in Home Visitation - North Region

SVP is committed to creating a safe, healthy and inclusive environment for everyone, particularly the children, young people and adults at risk/in need of protection we assist.

◀◀ SVP home visitation members have a vital role in helping vulnerable groups in the community. ▶▶

What is safeguarding?

Safeguarding is preventative action to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and adults at risk/ adults in need of protection. Safeguarding is an essential part of quality home visitation. It also provides information in case an SVP Member comes across a concern.



WHO IS A CHILD? A child is any person under the age of 18.

WHO IS AN ADULT AT RISK? In Northern Ireland an 'adult at risk of harm' is a person aged 18 or over whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their (a) personal circumstances, and/or (b) life circumstances.

WHO IS AN ADULT IN NEED OF PROTECTION? An 'adult in need of protection' is a person aged 18 or over whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their (a) personal circumstances, and/or (b) life circumstances, and (c) who is unable to protect their own wellbeing, property, assets, rights or other interests.

What is abuse?

ABUSE is a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to another individual or violates their human or civil rights.

WHAT ARE THESE TYPES OF ABUSE?



Physical



Emotional



Sexual



Financial



Exploitation



Neglect



Institutional

What can SVP members do if they have concerns about abuse?

IT IS IMPORTANT that everyone in SVP is aware that the person who first encounters a case of alleged abuse is not responsible for deciding whether or not actual abuse has occurred.



▶▶ SVP's role is not to investigate or form our own conclusions but to follow the SVP Safeguarding Policy – record, report and seek advice.

SVP Safeguarding Reporting Flow Chart

Concern Arises

Concerns may arise from

A

A disclosure of harm or abuse.

B

An observed incident of harm or abuse.

C

A suspicion of harm or abuse.

Action

Ensure the **safety** of the child/adult that you have a concern about.

If the person is in **immediate danger** report to the Health Trust or Police as appropriate.

Record your concern in writing and **report** to the Designated Liaison Person without delay.

Maintain **confidentiality** at all times.

Useful Contact Details

Northern Ireland Contact Details For Health Trust Gateway Teams for Children

- ▶ Belfast HCC Trust 028 9050 7000*
- ▶ Northern Gateway Team (Ballycastle, Ballymoney, Portrush, Coleraine) 028 7032 5462
- ▶ South Eastern Gateway Team (Antrim, Carrickfergus, Newtownabbey, Larne) 028 9334 0165
- ▶ Western Trust 028 7131 4090
- ▶ Southern HSC Trust 0800 783 7745*

* This number is for referrals.

HSC Trusts Adult Safeguarding Service

- ▶ Belfast 028 9504 1744
- ▶ Northern 028 2563 5512
- ▶ South Eastern 028 9250 1277
- ▶ Southern 028 3756 4423
- ▶ Western 028 7161 1366
- ▶ Regional Emergency Social Work Service 028 9504 9999

PSNI

- ▶ Emergency 999
- ▶ Non Emergency 101
- ▶ General Enquiries 101

RQIA Normal working hours 9am - 5pm

- ▶ Belfast 028 9051 7500
- ▶ Omagh 028 8224 5828



Society of St Vincent de Paul

North Region Safeguarding Officers (Designated Liaison)

Rosemary Simpson,
Member Lead
07739 085703

Pauline Brown,
SVP Regional Manager
028 9075 0150 /
07921 876230

◀◀ See www.svp.ie/safeguarding for more information ▶▶

Social Justice - A Key Cornerstone Of Our Work

The Society is committed to identifying the root cause of poverty and social exclusion, and, in solidarity with people experiencing poverty and disadvantage, we advocate and work for the changes required to create a more just and caring society for everyone.

With this aim in focus, members of the Region's Social Justice Group, proactively engaged with elected representatives from all political parties to highlight the impact of the cost of living crisis.

Concerned with the issues affecting those who have found themselves in poverty during the cost of living crisis, we asked for a collective coming together of parties in both parliaments to ensure people are supported to survive in this time of unprecedented hardship. We campaign for a willingness to work together to deliver the Anti-Poverty Strategy which was agreed for Northern Ireland.

Key issues we raised included:

- Provision of assistance for phone contracts/ internet for people on benefits who have to use their smartphone to access their benefits or information about their claim.
- People who require short term financial support for living expenses being offered the opportunity of availing of a discretionary grant in preference of being offered a loan.
- A reduction in the five-week wait for the Universal Credit assessment to be completed. Currently it results in people having to take

an advanced payment, and repayments leave people with a reduced rate of benefit, unnecessarily repaying debt to Government which pushes people deeper into poverty.

- A reintroduction of the £20 uplift to those on Universal Credit which was provided during lockdown. In our experience, this uplift brought people up to the position of "just managing". Reintroducing it would help those barely coping due to the rising costs of electricity and heating.
- Holiday hunger – futureproofing assurance that children living in poverty will not go hungry during school holidays by guaranteeing provision and funding for school meals throughout all holiday periods.
- Remove the two child limit for Universal Credit and Child Tax Credits. This policy results in increased hardship for families and removing it would protect children from poverty.
- Increase housing benefit allowances so that tenants in the private rented sector do not have to supplement their payments as properties available have higher rents than their entitlements. This leads to poverty among tenants in the sector who have to make compromises in other areas to meet their rent payments.

It is unfortunate that the absence of political will makes it difficult for progress. We will continue to meet with any elected representative to be the voice of those that we support on a daily basis and to raise awareness through the media to highlight all issues as part of our commitment to a fair and equal society for all.

Spotlight On SVP Social Justice Group chair, **Gerardine Cunningham**

I joined SVP in 2016. Having worked in Social Services all my working life, when I retired I asked myself the question – “what now?”

I had been reading a book called “Subversive Jesus” which spoke about how God turns the social order upside-down; where the poor are at the top of His agenda and I saw this as a challenge to me personally to engage with this way of thinking. SVP offered me the opportunity to turn this from a philosophical way of thinking to a way of living life, for which I will be eternally grateful.

The issue of justice has always been important to me, coming from a working class background and having seen the injustice of unemployment, lack of money, poor housing and insufficient housing in the community in which I lived. I was fortunate to have had good opportunities in terms of education and was fortunate to go to a good school and then to university in the days when Government saw education as an investment in the future generation, so I received a grant all the way through and, unlike young people today, was able to leave university without a debt to Government.

Today, I feel strongly that people are being treated punitively for being poor. The Universal Credit system deprives single people, single parents and families, of money on which to survive while they are “waiting for a decision” regarding benefits. They are forced to survive on nothing in this period, leading them to take a loan which is euphemistically called an “advance” which then launches them into debt to the Government. The system also pays them an insufficient amount of



Gerardine Cunningham, Chair of SVP Social Justice Group, is pictured with Stewart Dickson MLA and Pauline Brown, SVP Regional Manager, following a meeting in Parliament Buildings Stormont

benefit on which to survive. I have also been incensed by the system for PIP assessments, where people who are clearly ill are turned down and made to jump over endless hurdles until they give up or die. This cannot be the mark of a just society and I see the Social Justice Group as a way of channeling energy to see change happen.

As Chair of the Social Justice Group, I would like to see the Group as SVP's vehicle for holding Government to account and educating society about the reality rather than the myth about poverty. The Covid pandemic

has shown us that none of us who now experience comfortable lives are immune from falling into poverty. We have seen people who had comfortable lives before the pandemic losing their businesses and losing their jobs. Poverty should be everybody's business.

The Social Justice Group is working to achieve better connections with Government. Striving to gather robust information from the CRM system to present a case for change.

We want to see SVP as an active agent of societal change with respect to poverty.

Face to face and online meetings took place with a number of elected representatives during 2022.



A letter was received from Jim Shannon MP commending the vital service provided by the Society.

Young SVP

It was all change for Youth this year with the departure of both our temporary and permanent members of staff. Sarah Goodwin who was covering the role while Niamh Mulholland was on maternity leave left the Society in April following Niamh's return.

Unfortunately Niamh also tendered her resignation during the summer of 2022 to take up a new role near her home town of Lurgan.

We wish them both well for their future and formally record our thanks for their commitment to the Society.

While the position remains vacant, there is still lots of excellent work being carried out by our young people across a range of schools within the Region.

Schools and colleges participated in the development programme and some of these have active Conferences. Our sincere thanks to those teachers who continue to promote the ethos and values of SVP.

A number of enthusiastic schools also embraced innovative ways to fundraise and support our work. Congratulations to all of the young people involved.

Donate - Don't Dump!

St Patrick's College in Dungannon SVP Youth Environmental Project 'Donate Don't Dump' was led by Jodie Duffin and the Year 13 SVP group. Jodie often stepped in to speak at assemblies encouraging students and staff to donate unwanted items for Vincent's and help the planet by reducing unwanted fast fashion and by recycling clothes, bags, belts and shoes. The SVP group all led assemblies and visited Vincent's as part of the investigative work into recycling and SVP.

The students in Art and Technology created a purpose built clothing bank with Young SVP colours and made a video for Engineers Week showing how engineers protect the environment with Jodie taking the lead. The SVP group won the internal school competition to promote Engineers Week, considering a social justice and faith perspective.

The school also secured an NI Eco Green Flag award.



Loreto Grammar School, Omagh,

made their own hot chocolate to raise funds.



Fundraising at Blessed Trinity

The students of Blessed Trinity sold pre-owned books and raffle tickets for Easter baskets from their very own book stall in school! This stall was open every Friday during lent as part of the “almsgiving during lent” initiative. All proceeds were donated to SVP.

At Christmas, the school made a very generous donation of £500 to the Annual Appeal which was received by Shauna Murray, SVP Membership Support Officer.



Christmas Hampers from St Louis

Head Master of St Louis Grammar School and students presented members of St Colman’s SVP with Christmas hampers to assist local households.

Other schools that also engaged with SVP were St John’s in Dromore, St Pius X in Magherafelt and St Ronan’s in Lurgan.

Local schools supported our work in retail and have happily volunteered to promote sustainable fashion, sustainability and climate change.





Volunteering at Vincent's Ormeau

Students from St Joseph's College, Belfast, have been doing some great work at Vincent's on Ormeau Road. Some of the activities they have taken part in include; a fashion show using clothes from the shop, encouraging young people to shop at Vincent's, designing window displays for each new season, making St Brigid's crosses to raise funds for the Society and general work including labelling and sorting in the shop.

SVP member Mary-Grace Wilson, who worked alongside the students, under Shop Manager Gerry Keating's supervision, said: "I have enjoyed every minute with these students. Their youth and enthusiasm has helped to bring some life back to the Ormeau shop after being closed for so long during the pandemic!"



St Mary's Christian Brothers Grammar School

in West Belfast has been very supportive of SVP in West Belfast this year. Students are pictured presenting Valerie McGreevy, SVP West Belfast Area President, with a cheque for £710 which was raised from a sponsored walk.

Teachers Thomas McCaughey and Claire Wright are pictured presenting Valerie McGreevy, SVP West Belfast Area President, with a cheque for £2,710 - raised by a non uniform day and school collection.

Young SVP at Christmas

Loreto College Coleraine presented a cheque for £3,697 to members of St John's and St Malachy's SVP Conferences in Coleraine.



Year 11 and 12 pupils of Assumption Grammar handed over hampers and a cheque for almost £1,200 to members of SVP Ballynahinch.



Students at St Patrick's in Ballynahinch presented hampers to SVP Ballynahinch made up from the many items donated by families of the school.



Members of SVP attended St Killian's College carol service where they were presented with a generous donation for the Annual Appeal.



Mid Antrim Area President, Henry O'Loan, collected donated clothes from Head of Year Group Alana Donnelly at Slemish College, Ballymena. These were delivered to Vincent's in Ballymena to assist the local Blessed Virgin Conference.



St Mark's High School in Warrenpoint presented 36 beautiful Christmas hampers along with a cheque for £600 which was raised by staff raffling another hamper. These hampers were distributed within the school catchment area by members of the local SVP Conference and were a very welcome gift to families at Christmas.

St Patrick's Primary School, Saul, Downpatrick, presented a donation to SVP.



St Aidan's High School in Derrylin made a marvellous seasonal gesture of donating hampers to members of the local SVP Conference for distribution in the community.



Student Outreach

To reach students entering further and higher education, SVP representatives visited Freshers Fairs in St Mary's and Ulster University campuses in Belfast, Coleraine and Magee.

We also attended Queen's University's Volunteering and Wellbeing Fair in November.



West Belfast Childcare Facility

It was with much regret that the Society had to make the difficult decision to close the childcare facility in March 2022. Informed by the external environment, legislative requirements, the demand for our services and our capacity, it was, unfortunately, no longer feasible.

We worked very closely with parents and staff to identify other childcare facilities within the locality which had the capacity to provide immediate and alternative care for the small number of children who had been using our facility.

St Vincent de Paul continues to provide a network of support for the local community in West Belfast through our 18 Visitation Conferences in the area. We continue to offer this assistance to all families.

The Society recognises with much appreciation, the commitment, contribution and dedication carried out by all of the staff within the Centre, the members of the local Conferences and Management Committee, who have overseen this service, our funding partners, and also acknowledges and appreciates the support given by our parents over the years.

We wish our past pupils every success for a bright, happy future!



Closure of Drop-in Centre, Newry

The Drop-in Centre at Mill Street in Newry unfortunately closed during 2022.

On behalf of the Regional President, Board and Council, SVP would wish to put on record our sincere thanks to the staff, all of the members and volunteers, who worked so tirelessly to make such a difference to those who used the facility in the past.

A number of unforeseen circumstances, not least the impact of Covid, made it impossible to resume provision of the service which had been closed since March 2020.

All previous clients continue to receive help, assistance and support from members of St Joseph's SVP Conference through Home Visitation.

Mary Waide, SVP Regional President for the North Region, would like to especially thank the Conference President, Ciaran Rafferty, and members of the Committee, for their commitment and leadership throughout this process.



SVP Celebrates Volunteers' Week Garden Party

Representatives from across St Vincent de Paul North Region joined Fr Perry Gildea, SVP National President, Rose McGowan, and SVP Regional President for the North Region, Mary Waide, at a garden party to celebrate Volunteers' Week.

The theme of the event was 'A Time to Say Thanks!' and special recognition was given to those celebrating milestones in their service to the Society with a combined service of 450 years volunteering with SVP.

Mary Waide, SVP Regional President for the North Region, said: "It's wonderful to think that we have members celebrating a combined 450 years of service to St Vincent de Paul this year. I'm privileged to recognise volunteers who have given a lifetime of service to the Society and without their support, in the heart of our local communities across the North, the extent of the work of SVP would not be possible.

"Undeterred by the pandemic and now faced with handling requests for help from those struggling due to the cost of living crisis, our volunteers have shown resilience in how they continue to help the most vulnerable in our communities.

"It gave me great pleasure to welcome our National President, Rose McGowan, to the SVP Garden Party during Volunteers' Week, so we could honour our volunteers and celebrate their dedication, as it really is 'a time to say thanks' to all our volunteers for their faithful and continued service."

Ellen Brolly, Aidan Coyle, Brendan Lynch, Mary McCullagh, Julia McGuigan, Annette McWilliams, Pat O'Driscoll and Eamon Quinn received certificates and a memento of their service whilst enjoying afternoon tea in the gardens of Laurel Villa in Magherafelt.





Seaside Family Fun

Members of SVP from Armagh treated families to a day out in Newcastle where they enjoyed a visit to the beach and one teen even enjoyed a birthday cake to celebrate his 14th birthday. He had a stroke a number of years ago so has limited mobility on one side. He has lived in a tent for the last six years and hasn't had a cake or presents for years, so he was overjoyed. The day was just beautiful but heartbreaking at the same time for the members. The families were all absolutely grateful!



Members Congratulated

Omagh Area SVP members Michael Donnelly, Fionnuala Farley and Phil McKenna, have been recognised for their long service to the Society with a presentation by SVP Regional President for the North Region, Mary Waide.



Michael Donnelly



Fionnuala Farley



Phil McKenna

Members Retire

A mass was said recently for **Brenda Devlin**, outgoing West Belfast Area President. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Brenda for her commitment to SVP and wish her well in her retirement.



The Kilmore Crossgar SVP Conference members were sad to say farewell to **Gerry Mulhern** on his retirement. Patricia McKeown presented him with a certificate and medal as a thank you for his valued input over the years.



Wishing Vincentians **Lena Tomlinson** and **Agnes Dickson** a relaxing retirement.



Both have recently retired from St James SVP Conference in Whiteabbey having dedicated a combined 77 years service to the Society. The Conference members say they will miss them immensely but wish them a happy, healthy and well deserved retirement.

SVP in the Media

Mary Waide, SVP Regional President for the North Region, was interviewed by BBC Ireland Correspondent, Chris Page, for national BBC news programmes talking about the impact of the cost of living crisis and the support being offered by SVP across the North Region.



In January BBC Radio Ulster broadcast an Appeal on behalf of St Vincent de Paul on radio and online.



Patrick Friel participated in an interview with NVT to promote the work of SVP.



Single mum of two, Kerry Dodds, spoke to Channel 4 News about the help she was receiving from SVP.



Mary Waide, SVP Regional President for the North Region, was interviewed in Vincent's Ballymena talking about how SVP and other groups are supporting people in the local community.



Mary Waide, SVP Regional President for the North Region, was interviewed about the rising cost of living and the impact on those living in poverty.

Pauline Brown, SVP Regional Manager, called on the government to examine what they can do for those experiencing fuel poverty as energy costs are continuing to rise dramatically.



Board member Patrick Friel appeared on UTV Live to talk about the Fermanagh and District Council Cost of Living Support Scheme.



BBC Radio Ulster presenter Claire Graham interviewed Mary Waide, SVP Regional President for the North Region, about the cost of living crisis for the 'Sunday With Steven Rainey' show.



Pauline Brown, SVP Regional Manager, was interviewed by Robin Elliott for the Robin Elliott Tonight Show on NVTv promoting the Society's Annual Appeal.



Pauline Brown, SVP Regional Manager, spoke about the SVP Annual Appeal on the NVTv Christmas Special of Tonight With Gerry Kelly.



The Irish Catholic



Downpatrick Observer

Dates for your diary

April

- 1 April: Drumalis Retreat
- 2 April: Palm Sunday
- 7 April: Good Friday
- 9 April: Easter Sunday

June

- 1 – 7 June: Volunteers' Week
- 6 June: Members' Day at Tullyglass Hotel

September

- 9 September: Frédéric Ozanam Day
- 27 September: St Vincent de Paul Feast Day
Mass at St Peter's Cathedral, Belfast

October:

- 17 October: International Day for the
Eradication of Poverty

November:

- Launch of Annual Appeal

December:

- 25 December: Christmas Day



Cover Story

SVP member Dympna Gallagher explains the thinking behind her inspirational front cover design for the 2022 Yearbook encapsulating the ethos of SVP.

The central image is a version of the 'Tree of Life' with a suggestion of a figure representing the human connection reaching out to those in need. The leaf like shapes symbolise people, large and small, to suggest both adults and children.

The colours are deeper at the outside edge leading into the centre which is brighter signifying hope or a brightness coming out of darkness. The circular image leads the viewer into the centre, suggesting 'light at the end of the tunnel'.



IN MEMORIAM



Book of Life

A book of life has been launched which will include the names of those we sadly lost during the pandemic.

In the near future, the lives of those included in the book will be celebrated at a special mass when they will be remembered by name.

If you would like to add the name of anyone in your area who passed away during this time, please email their name to info@svpni.co.uk



Frank Bradley

It was with great sadness that the members of the Immaculate Conception SVP Conference of Newcastle learned of the death of Frank Bradley. Aged 89, Frank was, until his recent illness, a most energetic and devoted member of our Conference for about the last 30 years for which he received a long service medal a few years ago. His devotion to helping others was an inspiration to us all.

Frank was a very popular Dentist. He is survived by his wife Angela and his family Aedin, Aoife, Conac, Martin, Naomh. His daughter Maire predeceased him.

Over the years he played many roles in the Conference. He was Conference President before most of the current members even joined the Society. He was Area President from 2002 to 2004 and an Area Trainer since 2012, having been one of the first groups to take the training. He, along with the late Eileen Lynch, was involved with setting up the SVP shop in Newcastle.

His years on stage with the Newcastle Amateur Dramatic Society and with the Glee Singers stood him in good stead when he entertained holidaying visitors to Clare Lodge holiday home for many years.

He faithfully took people to the partially sighted club meetings. His non-judgemental charity knew no bounds and he used to say that if we were not occasionally taken in by false claimants then we were being too judgemental and not doing our job. His good humour, energy and boundless generosity will be sadly missed by all our members and his family.

May his loving soul find the everlasting joy it deserves.

IN MEMORIAM

Maria Graham



Members of Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, Carryduff, SVP Conference, were very saddened to learn of the death of Maria Graham, a long serving member.

Maria took a very active part in the life of the Conference, serving terms both as President and Secretary. For many years, she took on much of the organisation of the annual Christmas Dinner and the Summer Outing.

As a Conference member, Maria visited referrals at home – often several during the course of a week – and frequently spent Sunday afternoons visiting the elderly in local nursing homes. When our Conference members started to visit prisoners in Hydebank Women's Prison, Maria took on that role too and spent many Saturday mornings in the prison.

Maria was kind and compassionate to people who needed our help. She was straightforward and candid and people knew exactly where they stood with her. She took time to sit down and talk to people, seeking to understand their difficulties and suggesting ideas to try to make their lives better. She was never afraid to ask difficult questions to gain a better understanding of their situation. Maria had a particular interest in the young people she visited, many of whom had grown up in difficult circumstances. She often provided guidance and some straight talking to help them navigate their way.

During Conference discussions, Maria put forward her opinions robustly. She consistently spoke up on behalf of the lonely. Maria frequently reminded members that they had a Vincentian obligation to seek out and help the lonely. During quiet weeks when there were few referrals, she would urge members not to forget those living alone, and she never did, often dropping by for half an hour.

In addition to her work in the Society, Maria was an active member of several Parish organisations and was a regular reader in the church. Before she retired, she had been a primary school teacher in West Belfast and a teachers' union organiser.

Maria Graham was a small, slightly built woman whose appearance belied her inner energy, strength and sheer determination to improve peoples' lives for the better. She devoted a huge amount of her time to the work of the Society in our Parish and she will be greatly missed.

IN MEMORIAM



Patsy Higgins

Long term SVP member and past Conference President, Patsy Higgins, passed away on 17 September 2022, having served over 50 years in St Colman's SVP Conference, Killeel. He served a number of terms as Conference President. Mary, his wife of 63 years, who survives him, along with their five children, was also a

member, and they both worked tirelessly with fellow members to support and assist those who needed help.

A bricklayer by trade, Patsy lived the 87 years of his life with faith, compassion and humility. He complemented this with an impish sense of humour and usually had an interesting anecdote to tell before the weekly Conference meetings began. He was always first to arrive for meetings and spent Sunday afternoons visiting hospitals and care homes with his fellow members, to bring friendship and hope to patients and residents. Not content just to bring essentials, Patsy often provided practical assistance such as putting up curtains and shifting furniture for those unable to do this themselves.

Patsy and Mary were very hospitable. Members and friends loved to call at the house for a bit of craic.

May his kind and generous soul rest in peace.



Patricia Mulholland

Patricia (Patsy) joined St James SVP Conference in Whiteabbey in 1996 and soon became Secretary using her skills in this role to full effect in a humorous and conscientious way.

Patsy was well known throughout the local community but especially in St James Parish as a hard working and respected lady who dedicated years of her life to the Parish and SVP.

Patsy had a wonderful singing voice and for many years was a member of the local chorale society. Who in the Parish could forget Patsy's rendition of 'O Holy Night' at Christmas Eve Mass.

We miss Patsy's wit and wisdom. Even during her illness she often made it to our Conference meetings and continued to energise us with her enthusiasm and care for people in need.

Patsy passed away in February 2020.



Society of St Vincent de Paul

Northern Region

18 Area Councils

160 Conferences



Derry City

- Our Lady of Lourdes
- Holy Family Galliagh
- St Columba
- Immaculate Conception
- St Peter Strathfoyle
- St Eugene
- Good Shepherd
- St Mary Creggan
- St Francis of Assisi
- St Eithne
- St Patrick Carnhill
- St Canice

North Derry

- St Joseph Banagher
- St Patrick Claudy
- St Canice Limavady
- St Patrick Dungiven
- St Anthony Mullabuoy
- St Anne Faughanvale
- St Aidan Magilligan
- St Dismas Prison

Mid Ulster

- St Lurach Maghera
- St Columba Ballinascreen
- St Patrick Magherafelt
- Imm Concep Cookstown
- St Mary Bellaghy
- St Anne Kilrea
- St John Granaghan
- St Oliver Pl'kett Greenlough
- St Brigid Lavey

Mid Antrim

- St Mary Ahoghill
- St Comgall Antrim
- St Joseph Antrim
- Blessed Virgin Ballymena
- St Mary Portglenone
- St Mary Glenravel
- St Joseph Glenavy
- St MacNissi Randalstown
- St James Aldergrove
- SVP Toome & Duneane

North Region, 196-200 Antrim Road,
Belfast, Northern Ireland, BT15 2AJ

Phone: 028 9035 1561 Email: info@svpni.co.uk

www.svp.ie

North Belfast

St Mary Whitehouse
St James Whiteabbey
St Gerard & St Mary
Holy Cross
Sacred Heart
Holy Family
St Patrick
Ch of the Resurrection
St Colman Greenisland
St Therese Somerton Rd
St Mary Carnmoney

East Tyrone

Holy Family Coalisland
St Patrick Dungannon
St Mary Stewartstown
St Bridget Clonoe
St John Moy
St Ciaran Ballygawley

Strabane

St Theresa Sion Mills
St Mary Strabane
St Patrick Leckpatrick
St Patrick Castlederg

East Antrim

Sacred Heart Ballyclare
St Mary Cushendall
St Patrick Glenariffe
St Comgall Larne
St Nicholas C'fergus
OL Lourdes W'head

S&E Belfast

St Brigid
St Malachy
Holy Rosary
St Bernadette

St Colmcille B'hackamore
Imm Heart Mary Drumbo
St Matthew

Omagh

St Columba Omagh
St Malachy Beragh
Christ the King Strathroy
St Davog Dromore
Visitation Termonmaguirc
St Patrick Drumquin
St Mary Killyclogher
St Lawrence Fintona

North Down

St Comgall Bangor
St Patrick Newtownards
St Patrick Portaferry
St Bernard Cv Kircubbin
Holy Redeemer B'Holme
St Colmcille Holywood

Fermanagh

Blessed Virgin Enniskillen
St Molaise Irvinestown
Imm Con Newtownbutler
Holy Cross Lisnaskea
St Joseph Ederney
St Ninnidh Derrylin
St Mary Tempo
St Nailes Kinawley

Armagh & Craigavon

St Patrick Portadown
Holy Family Seagoe
St Peter & Paul Lurgan
St Mary Tullysaran
St Patrick Armagh
St John XXIII Magheralin
St Joseph Prison

St John Paul II W'Cross
St Anthony Craigavon
St Patrick Banbridge
St Patrick Aghagallon
St Colman Dromore
St Patrick Keady

Newry & Mourne

St Brigid Newry
St Joseph Newry
Sacred Heart Cloghogue
St John Hilltown
St Bronagh Rostrevor
St Patrick Warrenpoint
St Colman Kilkeel
St Joachim Attical
St Benedict N'townhamilton
St Mary Burren

Kilmegan

St Malachy Castlewellan
Sacred Heart Dundrum
St Malachy Kilcoo
St Patrick Ballynahinch
Christ the King Drumaness
Imm Concep Newcastle
St Patrick Leitrim
St Michael Finnis

East Down

St Nicholas Ardglass
St Joseph K'ough & Bright
St Patrick Saul
St Mochai Saintfield
Stella Maris Strangford
St Joseph C'gar & K'more
St Patrick Downpatrick

West Belfast

Corpus Christi
St Luke Twinbrook
St Anne Dunmurry
St Patrick Lisburn
St Patrick Derriaghy
St Michael
St Oliver Plunkett
Most Holy Redeemer
St Paul
St Teresa
St Peter & St Vincent
Ch of Nativity Poleglass
St Joseph Hannahstown
Our Lady Queen of Peace
Christ the Redeemer
St Peter the Rock S'Ford
St Pio Prison
St Agnes

North Antrim

Errigal SVP
St John Coleraine
St Malachy Coleraine
St Mary Portstewart
St Patrick Ballymoney
St Patrick Portrush
St Brigid Ballycastle
St Mary Rasharkin
Sacred Heart Cloughmills



North Region, 196-200 Antrim Road, Belfast, Northern Ireland, BT15 2AJ

Phone: 028 9035 1561 Email: info@svpni.co.uk

www.svp.ie