



# Christmas in July

## You've done it again!

Yet another record result for the December 2012 Christmas Appeal — £2 million — means that, over the last 3 years, you have helped us raise over £5 million to help homeless and vulnerable people across the UK!

You, and tens of thousands of people like you, cared enough to help turn around the life of someone who was in a desperate situation, so THANK YOU! Two million thanks, in fact! You can read inside about the difference your donation is making.

**The 2013 BBC Radio 4 St Martin-in-the-Fields Christmas Appeal — our 87th! — will be broadcast on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> December and repeated on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> December.**

**Hear the stories of some of the people helped by your donations on “Received with Thanks” on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> December and repeated on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> December.**

### A MESSAGE FROM THE VICAR

Not long ago I had lunch with one of the more influential people in our church and country. ‘I was talking with my mum last night,’ my companion related. ‘Would you believe it, she told me: “I always send a donation every year to St Martin-in-the-Fields. I’ve been sending them a donation for twenty or more years.” “May I ask why, mother?”’ to which his mother replied, summarily and succinctly: “St Martin’s cares about what matters.”’



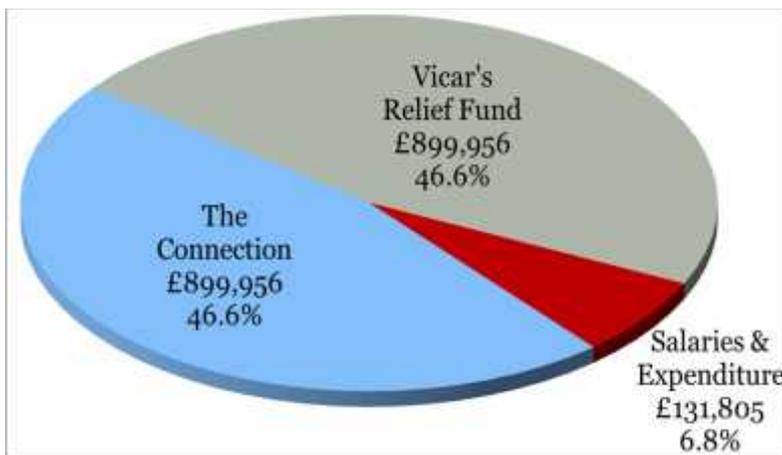
I tell that story because it conveys more neatly than anything else what the Christmas Appeal is all about. Somehow over the last century this single church in central London has developed that priceless reputation that only decades of dedication could achieve. ‘St Martin’s cares about what matters.’ My job is to make sure it always does. And, with your generous support, care for the destitute and most vulnerable in our society will continue to be at the heart of that.

Revd Dr Sam Wells

July 2013



93p of every £1 we spend is going to help people in need!



**The Connection at St Martin's**, located next to St Martin's church in Trafalgar Square, helps thousands of homeless people in Central London every year. The grant from the Christmas Appeal helps fund The Connection's core services which make a life-changing difference to homeless and vulnerable people.

Services include:

- Street Outreach team providing proactive support for people sleeping rough
- Day Centre with showers, computers and café serving nutritious hot meals
- Night Centre providing short term emergency accommodation
- Workspace service helping people find training and employment
- Advice & Housing team helping people at risk of becoming homeless



### **WILLIAM'S STORY**

My dad died when I was 9 and my family imploded. It wasn't a happy home. I've suffered from depression all my life and been struggling to find solutions for my problems. The alcohol also didn't help and I would drink every day.

I've been on and off the streets for some time. You've got to be careful on the street particularly if you want to sleep, it's dangerous.

I was referred to The Connection to study an IT course. Then there was the chance to take on a voluntary placement as an IT Teaching Assistant with The Connection's Step Up programme. I assist in developing students' computer skills.

Step Up has done me wonders. I'm looking to develop the skills I've learned in the classroom and since been making enquiries about teacher training. I have the confidence and feel like I'm getting to the right place. I've been dry since the day I came off the streets.



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The **Vicar's Relief Fund** helps individuals and families in need across the UK. A relatively small grant (£200, on average) from us isn't going to solve all the problems of someone living on the edge, but our aim is to help avert a crisis or alleviate distress: that's why, so far this year, more than 4 out of every 5 of our grants have been made within 24 hours. Assistance from us often:

- prevents someone being made homeless by helping towards rent arrears
- enables someone to move away from the streets or out of a hostel by helping towards a deposit or rent in advance
- supports someone who has been homeless set up a home with a bed, cooker or other household items
- provides ordinary living expenses for people who are destitute.

Since the beginning of the year, the Vicar's Relief Fund has made over 1400 grants to people in need all over the UK; that will have doubled by the time of the next Christmas Appeal in December. The map below shows where those 1400 people have been helped so far this year thanks to you. There isn't space to tell you all of the ways your donation is helping, but here are some of their stories:

**Antrim:** Rose looks after her 2 year old granddaughter, but they were at risk of losing their home due to rent arrears. A grant of £182 secured their home and kept them together.

**Bangor:** A block grant helps the Cathedral and a local hostel provide 600 meals for homeless clients.

**Wirral:** Scott had struggled to maintain a settled way of life since leaving the army. A £150 grant helped with furniture for his new flat.

**Barry:** Karen is a vulnerable young mother. She found a property near her support network, but needed help with the deposit. £250 from the VRF helped get her and her baby into a place they could call home.

**Fife:** David hadn't received any benefit payments for four months by the time his support worker contacted us. A £100 grant meant he could buy food and heat his flat until his benefits were sorted out.

**Newcastle:** Chris wrote to us: "I cannot thank you enough for the help in such bad times. Maybe one day I will be in a position to help someone, which would give me great pleasure."

**Bury St Edmunds:** Rudi's mental health and addiction problems led him to sofa-surfing and sleeping rough. He is now living in a shared flat and getting the help he needs. With £210 from the VRF he was able to get a bed and mattress.

**Torquay:** John had been sleeping in a tent on the edge of town. Once in supported accommodation he was keen to get his life back on track. A £150 grant helped him with the necessary cards and tools to get back into work.



## VICAR'S RELIEF FUND CONFERENCE

In May, the Vicar's Relief Fund team hosted its first conference at St Martin-in-the-Fields. The 93 support workers who attended came from as far afield as Cardiff, Manchester, Yorkshire and Glasgow, and are among hundreds who receive VRF grants on behalf of their clients in need.

There were discussions about how the VRF works, changes to the benefits system, the role of faith groups in combating poverty, problems facing asylum seekers and refugees, the impact of poverty on individual lives, as well as a tour of The Connection. Many of the guests told us the main reason they came was simply to say "thank you" and to learn more about where the money came from.

Kate Howells, who will be producing this year's Christmas Appeal on BBC Radio 4, interviewed delegates about their work. She also spoke to the conference about how the stories of the people whose lives have been transformed by the VRF will be vital when putting together this year's Appeal broadcasts on Radio 4.

## SPECIAL THANKS

It's always very moving and humbling when we receive a legacy, no matter how big or small; sadly, it's too late to thank the person for their thoughtful generosity. If you would like to help us continue our work with people in need through a legacy in your will, please talk to your legal advisor or contact us for an information pack. And if you have already named the Christmas Appeal in your will and feel able to tell us, that will allow us to thank you.

If you would like to make a regular commitment through a standing order, go to our website to download a form, or get in touch with us and we will send you a copy of the form to complete.



## AND FINALLY...

This is our fourth annual mid-year report. It's our way of thanking you for your support, sharing our news and letting you know how we're putting your donation to use. We hope you found it interesting. Thanks for reading *Christmas in July*.

## St Martin-in-the-Fields Christmas Appeal

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