

Forty Years of The Passage a Lenten Journey Day 5 Lent Monday Week 1 Passage 1984/85

The 1985 report reflected the work following the development of the Day Centre area funded by the GLC and several charitable trusts.

The following extracts are from the advice report: -

Until November 1984 advice work continued in its previous fashion being available when a worker was free from other duties. With the number of visitors increasing since the move into 'new' premises in March 1984 - so did the number of requests for advice. In October we decided to establish a permanent Advice office which would cover several areas of work and would be available every working day for at least two hours.

Since October, we have seen, on average, ten people a day over about three hours. Our two main areas of work have been emergency accommodation and DHSS problems (welfare benefits).

Statistics from 1984/85 Average Number visiting Passage per day 250. Advice sessions

Emergency accommodation	319	DHSS	428	Free food enquiries	113
Identification	68	Housing	196	Women's royal voluntary	
Detoxification	31	Counselling	23	service- Clothing	245
				Other	326

total number using the advice office 1,650 (93 female and 1,557 male)."

The Passage today: - The 1984/85 Advice office has become our welfare rights and money services which still deals with DWP (DHSS) and issues of proof of ID. Over the years other elements of advice have become separate services. In the six months to 31 December 2020 we supported 132 benefit claims and helped with 141 other financial issues particularly debt matters.

Our Lenten sacrifice today could contribute towards the cost of obtaining replacement proof of identification. This can be vital as a first step towards claiming benefits.

Heavenly Father we pray for all those with no income at all who feel desperate, unsure where food, clothing and shelter will come from. May the work of The Passage help those entitled to financial help to claim those entitlements. Amen

Today's reading is from the Gospel of St Matthew



Jesus said to his disciples: "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.'

Then the righteous will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?'

And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.'

Forty Years of The Passage a Lenten Journey Day 6 Lent Tuesday Week 1 Passage 1985/86

Extract from the chairman's report. (Mr Anthony Bartlett)

Intense activity goes on at The Passage from the very early morning when our first 'customers' arrive till sometimes late at night when the S.V.P. van brings the very generous gift of food from Marks & Spencer, not forgetting our local Sheraton Patisserie daily contribution.

"Fr Patrick O'Donoghue our Management Committee Chairman has been appointed Rector of Allen Hall, the Diocesan Seminary. The Passage owes a great debt of gratitude for his zeal and enthusiasm during the years of his chairmanship and for the close liaison he built up between the Cathedral and the work at The Passage, and for the spiritual approach to our aims. Fr Vladimir Felzmann, his successor at the Cathedral has taken over as Vice - Chairman and Spiritual Director. Sister Eileen O'Mahoney the Superior of St Vincent's Carlisle Place and the original instigator of The Passage will be taking up a new appointment later this year; no words of mine can describe the inspiration and energy that emanates from this apparently tireless Daughter of Charity and I have no hesitation in saying that such success as The Passage merits can be laid fairly and squarely at her door."

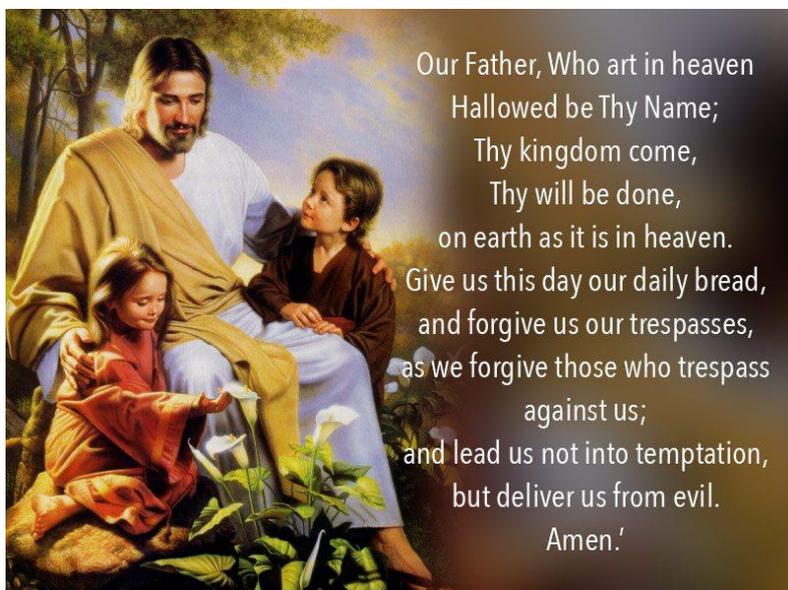
From Peggy a volunteer

"Everyone who comes to The Passage - in whatever capacity- is seeking something. It may be warmth, food, the need for companionship or the need to be of some use. And everyone seems to find their needs met. This is as true for the volunteers as it is for the staff or guests. We all have so much to learn from each other and each, in his or her way, has something to give. For many, The Passage provides a meaningful rhythm in the cacophony of life in an inner city."

Today we still benefit from the wise counsel of Fr Vladimir Felzmann now a trustee, although he was absent for the odd decade when based in Hertfordshire. Sister Eileen and Fr Pat have both died. The present superior of the Daughters of Charity in Carlisle Place, Sister Eileen Glancy, serves as a trustee. The contribution of the volunteers is even more important now than it was in 1986. Peggy volunteered for over 25 years and has now gone to her eternal reward.

Could you help The Passage if you do not do so already by committing your time? If you are not able to help directly could you help raise awareness of The Passage and our work with homeless people in your local community. Maybe a small group could pray for our work and for clients who are in difficulty. There will be an opportunity to get in touch later in Lent. Today's gospel: -

"Jesus said to his disciples: "In praying, do not babble like the pagans, who think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them. Your Father knows what you need before you ask him. This is how you are to pray:



If you forgive men their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions."

Heavenly Father we pray for all those who help The Passage, volunteers, staff, trustees, and benefactors. We also thank God for the homeless people whose lives we have been privileged to touch.

Amen

Forty Years of The Passage a Lenten Journey
Day 7 Lent Wednesday Week 1 Passage 1986/87

The Passage moved a step further in the next year with funding through Urban Aid to create additional office space and to employ two further workers to advise on housing and resettlement and to facilitate small group work.

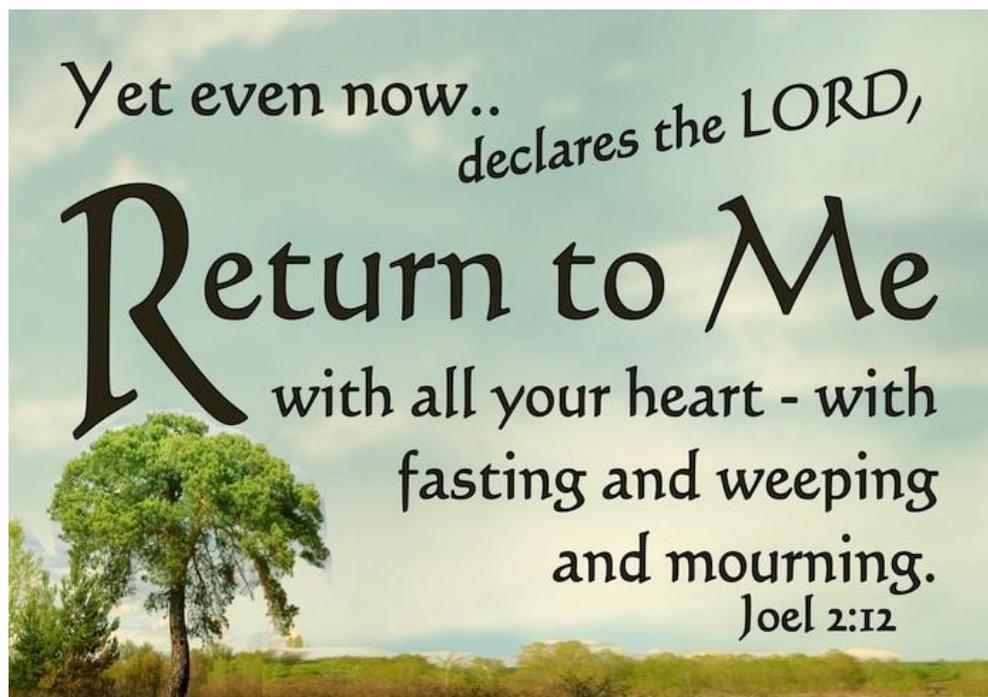
Sister Paula Sheehan, a Daughter of Charity joined us in January 1987. She gave housing advice and support to 141 individuals. Her services were added to the Friday morning advice from Central London Housing Advisory Services (CLHAS) whose two housing advisors were available for one morning a week to give specialist housing advice. Over the full year they had taken on 124 new clients, providing 337 advice sessions. Sister Paula and CLHAS's combined statistics give an interesting pattern of the people helped. 217 men and 48 women, Age under 26 - 59; 26-59 - 149 over 60 -57. 157 individuals were found accommodation.

The group worker's report outlined the importance of literacy and numeracy work. A theme to recur over the years "as many of our people dropped out of or were not interested in their education at some stage in their lives." Then as now this was a key factor in their poverty.

"Home economics, with the help of a dietician has an important role to play in helping people to plan nourishing meals on their limited income. We hope it will provide people with the opportunity to relearn skills lost through poor living conditions, or to gain skills essential for self-catering when moving into a bed-sit, or some form of sheltered accommodation.

A Women's Group has been established with the aim of increasing their self-confidence. Many of the women here are downtrodden by their male counterparts and have been or are being abused. The women meet once a week with one or more of the female staff in order to discuss problems and engage in leisure activities."

Today at The Passage we work closely with Westminster City Council's services to find housing for homeless people with our Housing Support Services team. We also work to find housing with private landlords across London, often needing to fund the deposit. Resettlement training and support and the women's group remain key parts of our services in 2021. Without this input the homeless women and men we support would struggle on their path to a settled way of life.



Heavenly Father we pray for all those homeless people on the path away from homelessness and we pray for homeless women who in many cases are more vulnerable. Amen

May our Lenten sacrifices help to provide the materials needed in the group activities through which Homeless People receive our support.

Forty Years of The Passage a Lenten Journey Day 8 Lent Thursday Week 1 Passage 1987/88

This year's annual report suddenly expands to a well laid out 44-page A5 booklet. Still created in house in spare time but put together by Sr Clare Burke DC, a skilled retired headteacher, who after retirement had been a chaplain at Westminster Cathedral before joining The Passage. Our extract for 1987/88 is taken from the director's report by Sr Barbara Smith DC who effectively took over from Sr Eileen as the person running The Passage.

“Since last year, the number using The Passage has increased. There are more short-term users than before, getting away from something, someone, or some situation, or searching for help, work, or accommodation, but meantime needing somewhere with our facilities to help them over the hump, while they try to grapple with crisis in personal relationships, with unemployment, unemployability and homelessness. And so, we must help to carry their burden of stress, of failure to find a roof, of rejection. Frustration and often, sadly of destitution, too.

That so many are sleeping rough, here on our doorsteps, is a terrible thing and these people are us and are from every sector of society, brought low for a variety of reasons, and not sleeping out by real choice.

This year brought a welcome increase in staff and so more problems are brought to light. Whilst The Passage must always retain its identity as being the “starting point” from the street, where everyone is welcome irrespective of health, appearance, or condition, it has now developed its “through-put” services to help those same people to varying degrees of a better quality of life.”

Scott Birnie who ran the client entrance reported “The appointment of a permanent ‘doorman’ has provided another opportunity for picking up on individual users problems and pointing these people in a direction where these problems can be solved. The recurring questions: ‘How do I get to?’ and ‘Where can I find?’ have resulted in a small but growing collection of maps, lists and reference books, which is constantly being supplemented by the valuable pool of personal experience of the Passage Users themselves.”

Today The Passage remains here welcoming all those in need who come to our door. Maybe the follow-on services have developed beyond recognition, but we continue to give a warm welcome to all who need our help. The stock of helpful material in reception continues to grow now aided by the internet.

Let us be aware this Lent that all our contributions enable The Passage to provide a warm welcome.

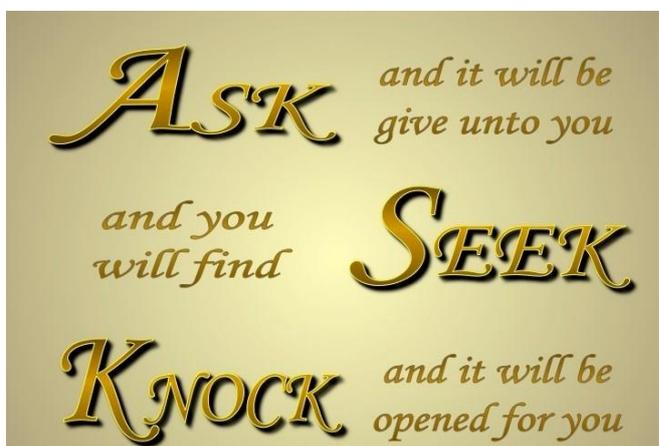
Heavenly Father we pray for all those homeless people who still come to The Passage for help. As many new people seek our help following the pandemic, we recognise that there but for the grace of God go I. Amen.

Gospel - Matthew 7:7-12

Jesus said to his disciples: “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Which one of you would hand his son a stone when he asked for a loaf of bread, or a snake when he asked for a fish?

If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good

things to those who ask him. “Do to others whatever you would have them do to you. This is the law and the prophets.”



Forty Years of The Passage a Lenten Journey Day 9 Lent Friday Week 1 Passage 1988/89

With homelessness growing rapidly Sister Barbara's report on the year commences:

"Poverty and Homelessness ... Age old problems. In their day Isaiah and Jeremiah had some powerful things to say about hungry people, about sheltering the homeless poor, about paying low wages, about oppression of the poor and about those who grew rich at their expense. I expect they would have to say the same things today, especially since oppression of the poor and defrauding labourers of their wages are two of the four sins 'crying to heaven for vengeance'. Another phrase which crops up nowadays, is one which divides needy people into categories - the "deserving poor" and the "undeserving poor". I sometimes reflect on their opposites ...the "deserving rich" and the "undeserving rich" ... and I wonder how many people really made their way in life without some financial assistance somewhere along the line. And just as there are many rich people so positioned because of the good things they inherited which set them off on a good start, so there are many homeless and needy people so positioned because of the bad things they inherited which set them off to a bad start.

All of those who have joined The Passage 'Community' including benefactors, volunteers, and staff, have made a response - not a response of sympathy, guilt, or blame, but rather fellowship and understanding, knowing deep in our hearts, that very easily, positions could be reversed and any one of us could, one day, be in that very group categorised as 'Homeless'."

Sister Barbara went on to outline amongst all the detailed work undertaken the lobbying of government on the welfare reforms which had caused homelessness, with the support of Cardinal Hume. There were particularly larger numbers of young homeless people. The Passage's concern for them led to the foundation of The Depaul Trust - initially providing accommodation to young homeless people. This year also marked the start of the weekend service in the day centre.

Today for The Passage it remains important to lobby on changes to laws and regulations which cause poverty and homelessness. Our prime work is always direct service of homeless people but through that service we have the first-hand knowledge that is useful to bring about reform.

Let us remember this Lent that we can lobby for those less privileged than ourselves.

Heavenly Father we pray for our government and parliament that they may govern and legislate in a way that cares for those suffering from poverty and homelessness. Help us to do what we can with our time and resources to assist our sisters and brother. Amen.



Gospel - Matthew 5:20-26

Jesus said to his disciples:

"I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter into the Kingdom of heaven. "You have heard that it was said to your ancestors, you shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment. But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment, and whoever says to his brother, Raqa, will be answerable to the Sanhedrin, and whoever says, 'You fool,' will be liable to fiery Gehenna.

Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

Forty Years of The Passage a Lenten Journey Day 10 Lent Saturday Week 1 Passage 1989/90

The annual report this year partly marked the 10th anniversary of The Passage. I imagine those writing it hoped that homelessness might be part of the past before The Passage reached 40.

Sister Barbara's report highlighted many developments, which this year included the employment of our first alcohol worker, Marie Winters, who was to work with us for over eight years. At the time alcohol was the major addiction issue and Marie wrote: -

"Alcohol abuse is a very serious problem for many Passage Users. The problem drinker who is homeless or living in poor accommodation and/or also has mental health problems finds him/herself in a vicious circle, which is extremely difficult to break out of. Street drinkers drink with others in the same position or alternatively, drink in lonely isolation. The hopelessness of their situation is overwhelming, and from day to day the only option seems to be to continue this life destroying cycle.

The decision to do something about a drink problem is a difficult one to make. The prospect of suffering withdrawal symptoms & the type of life changes required by sobriety, is a daunting and frightening one. This is much more so for a homeless person; whose life revolves around the acquisition and consumption of alcohol' and who will receive little or no support from his peers in his attempts to change things. Alcohol makes the despair of homelessness seem more bearable, and paradoxically, the housing crisis becomes much more difficult to deal with when the individual has a drink problem."

Marie goes on to explain her role in providing individual support to people in this situation and in accessing varied programmes: residential and non-residential.

Today for The Passage addiction remains a major issue and our team has two drug/alcohol workers and a dual diagnosis worker for those affected by both addiction and mental health issues. We work with other addictions such as gambling, which can cause homelessness.

Heavenly Father, we pray for all those on the streets affected by addiction that they will find the help they need, and we will find the opportunity to encourage change in those apparently settled into long term addiction. Amen

Today's reading focuses on loving your enemies. This may have no direct parrel in our work but many people we see feel cut off from their families due to conflict. Let us pray today for those homeless people and that they may be able, with support, to resolve those conflicts.

Gospel - Matthew 5:43-48

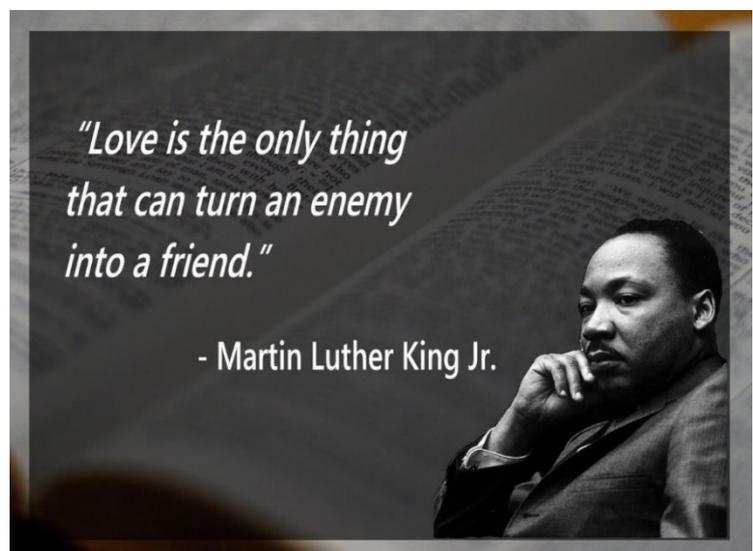
Jesus said to his disciples:

"You have heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.

But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust.

For if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have? Do not the tax collectors do the same?

And if you greet your brothers and sisters only, what is unusual about that? Do not the pagans do the same? So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect."



Forty Years of The Passage a Lenten Journey
Day 11 Lent Monday Week 2 Passage 1990/91

On 10th December 1990, The Passage opened a Night Shelter for Westminster Cathedral in the Cathedral Hall. This was a direct reaction by the parish to the number of people sleeping out locally, and at least the 50 people admitted would be able to sleep in a dry warm place even if a sleeping bag on a mattress on the floor was no long-term solution. The hall was still in use during the day and early evening, so The Passage took possession of the Hall from late evening till 7.00 the next morning. All the mattresses and sleeping bags were kept in a storeroom off the Hall and whatever needed washing was returned to the Day Centre laundry. This was The Passage's first venture into overnight accommodation and in many different ways The Passage has continued to provide overnight accommodation ever since.

Fr Pdraig Regan CM wrote

“Vincent de Paul had a penetrating way of observing the poor person. The visible reality, he saw was often raw, dirty, and ugly. But as he put it, when you turn the coin around and gaze at the deeper reality behind the rough façade, what you see is nothing less than the face of Jesus. Seen like that the poor person is worthy of respect, even reverence.

I work as a member of staff in the Passage Night Shelter and visit The Passage Day Centre. I see my ministry as one of presence. I circulate. I am available. I am a listening ear. I hang around ready to engage anyone who wants to talk or chat. It is a meagre offering but quite tiring just the same.

Each person in the Night Shelter and at the Day Centre has a story to tell. Some do not want to tell it; I respect their silence. Some tell it hesitantly I encourage them. Some tell the story readily and fluently, I listen. Their experiences include stories of lost childhood, shattered family life, school, relationships, work (or lack of it) and, frequently prison. Almost always there is the theme of abuse, tragedy, failure, and rejection. A person whose life “like a leaf that the seasons tear up and condemn” has a poor sense of self-worth. “Father I am the black sheep of the family.” Their stories vary from sad to joyful (Fred: “Father, I got it” as he exhibited the key to his first home in years). Simply and directly related these are chronicles of women and men who know like Jesus the feeling of being “a worm and no man”. I believe they need to speak about that experience. I try to listen as they speak for and against themselves. In their simplicity, tragedy and nobility I am permitted to gaze on the face of Jesus Christ.”

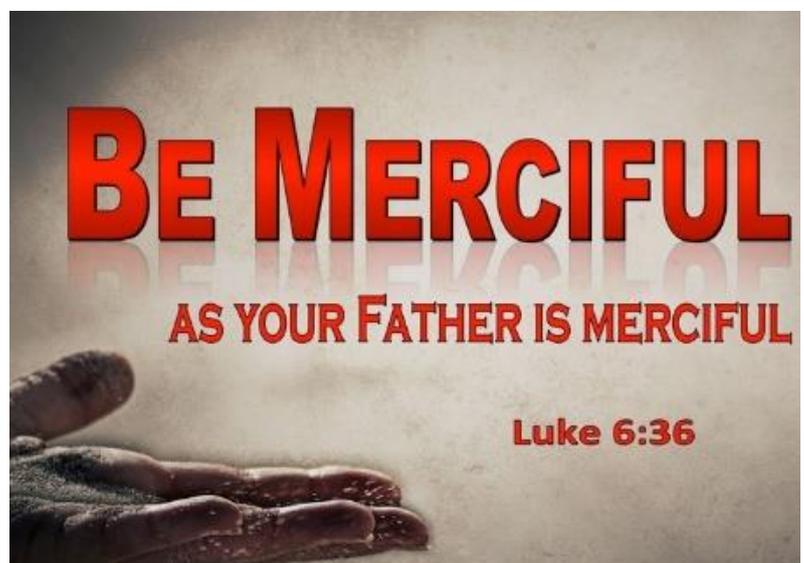
The Passage today: The successor of the Night Shelter is Passage House a 40 single bedroom hostel. The physical accommodation may be better, but the residents still come with their individual brokenness. Fr Pdraig left us only in October 2020 to move to a parish in Dublin. His ministry continues through Sr Bernie Geary DC and Fr Chinedu Enuh CM.

Loving God we thank you for our lives and all the good things which we enjoy.

Help those unfortunate enough to have nowhere to call home today. Help us to serve you in the homeless poor and to see the face of your son in the poorest in society.

As we continue our journey remind us of the call to prayer, fasting and almsgiving. From our plenty may we share with those who are without.

Amen



Forty Years of The Passage a Lenten Journey Day 12 Lent Tuesday Week 2 Passage 1991/92

1991/92 was another year of growth, development, and change. Sister Barbara Smith's time as director of The Passage came to an end in January 1992 and after a short break, she was running a project in Scotland. A couple of weeks before Sister Barbara left, we were joined by her successor Sister Bridie Dowd.

The Night Shelter which had been opened in December 1990 as a temporary measure ran all year. The combination of helping people to come off the streets at night and the access to help and advice through the day centre led to some of the longer-term rough sleepers using the night shelter moving on to more permanent homes. Given this success, the night shelter had to keep going. The Passage started to search for a better location where a better service could be provided.

Over several years, The Passage had accumulated some funds from donations not used for immediate running costs. In 1991 it was decided to buy a five-bedroom house in Kensal Green. Sr Paula our lead housing worker took charge of this project. She knew there were those on the street who might deteriorate whilst waiting for housing. This temporary accommodation provided a haven for those whom, she was certain would eventually find long term housing.

Our extract from the annual report this year is from a volunteer, Theresa Giwa who had been helping us from the mid-1980s.

"My first day at the Centre as a volunteer, I felt enormous sympathy for the many people both male and female, who for one reason or another had lost their homes and have no family to whom they can go. But I find consolation in the marvellous way the centre is being run, i.e., providing breakfast, lunch, laundry, and showers as well as medical care, advice on DSS (welfare rights), housing and finding employment through the Job club. It is lovely too, that those who wish can spend a little time in quiet prayer.

As the resources of The Passage are limited, it needs volunteers to help in the daily running of the Centre. My few hours a week in The Passage have become so much part of me that I feel as if I have not achieved a thing in a week if I fail to go there, but what a joy I have if I am able to offer a little contribution of time to those who are homeless, as they are our brothers and sisters."

Theresa continued to volunteer until March 2020, when as an older volunteer she had a break from volunteering during the pandemic. Sadly, Theresa passed away in December 2020 and we remember her in our prayers.

The Passage today: continues to rely on our volunteers as it has done throughout its life. Perhaps this was emphasised during the first lockdown when we were sending over 300 cooked dinners & packed breakfasts and lunches out to homeless people who had come in off the street and into temporary accommodation to keep safe. Many of our older volunteers could not safely come in to help but a new generation was ready to help.

Our prayer today is also taken from the 1991/92 annual report. Alec Stokes a volunteer for just over a year wrote about his experiences. He finished: -

"When I first started working at The Passage, I had only intended to work for a couple of hours a week, but somehow the place became addictive. Now it seems to have become a second career for me!

Loving Father thank you for the privilege of being part of the Family of The Passage. Amen"



Matthew 23:3

Forty Years of The Passage a Lenten Journey
Day 13 Lent Wednesday Week 2 Passage 1992/93

This year was marked by the first two of a series of improvements to the Centre which were to mark the next ten years. The real constraint on the work in the centre was the lack of space. We operated in a large lower ground floor area with a false ceiling and raised floor. By lowering the floor in parts of the building there were two floor heights and extra offices could be created. Anthony Bartlett our chairman wrote: -

“In last year’s Report our Director, Sister Bridie, noted that she had been with us for just four months. In the twelve months that have passed since then an entire new office block of “counselling” rooms have been built and, as I write, we are half-way through further interior alterations and additions, which, when completed, should give us all the space we need for the twelve units which operate in The Passage as part of our programme of rehabilitation.

Whilst all this has been going on, Sister Bridie and her colleagues have managed to maintain our normal service of welcoming, resting, feeding, and clothing the daily number of some 300 persons who come through our door each day. It is not just a question of long hours and hard work, the most important ingredient is the spirit of willingness, I could almost say the joy and happiness, of co-operating with each other to give those we are trying to help, the very best from our resources.

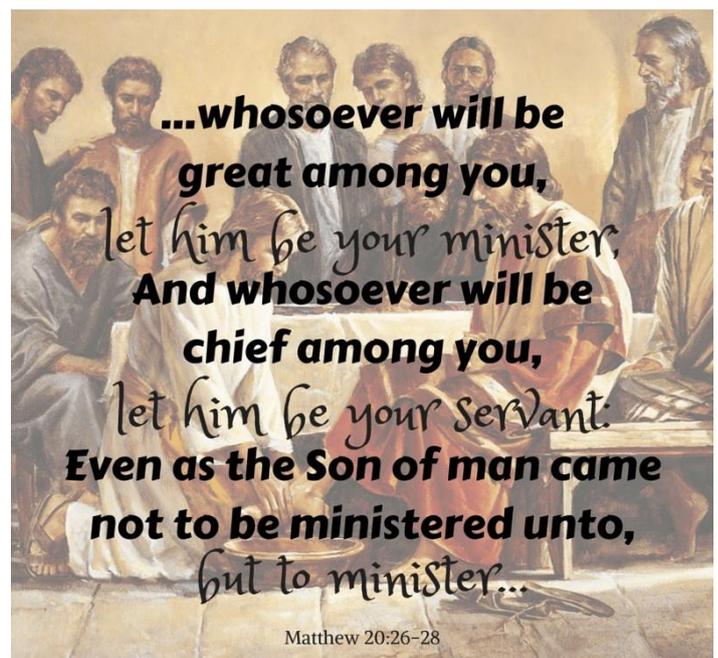
This will be the last of my reports as Chairman, as I shall be retiring at the AGM this year, so I take this opportunity of expressing, on behalf of everyone in The Passage, including all the users as well as staff and volunteers, our gratitude to Sr Anne, the Superior at St Vincent’s, for the wonderful, unstinting support she has given us during her years in office, despite her many other commitments. We wish her well in her new appointment as she will be leaving us this Summer.”

The Passage today: Although the care delivered to homeless people is paramount, there is increased dignity and respect in delivering that care in well designed and maintained premises. For those who have come from the street we must give the best possible service. What was good last year may not be appropriate next year. The Passage constantly strives to give the best possible service in good quality buildings. The pandemic has shown up weaknesses in Passage House which will be fully refurbished later this year.

Thank you, Lord, for the privilege of serving your poor. May I never accept second best in serving the homeless poor as we see Christ in those we serve.

Teach us, good Lord,
to serve you as you deserve,
to give and not to count the cost,
to fight and not to heed the wounds,
to toil and not to seek for rest,
to labour and not to ask for any reward,
save that of knowing that we do your will.

Amen



Forty Years of The Passage a Lenten Journey Day 14 Lent Thursday Week 2 Passage 1993/94

The summer and autumn of 1993 marked two milestones for The Passage. Firstly, the Night Shelter moved from Cathedral Hall to redundant office premises, belonging to the Health Service, which although scheduled for redevelopment, were temporarily available. This was to set a theme for the 1990s as our Night Shelter was always at risk of becoming homeless and our quest for a permanent home began. Secondly, by September the day centre building work was complete (for the time being). With government support the housing and resettlement team grew to four staff but more on that next year.

Mary Gomez our night shelter manager wrote.

“In July 1993, the night shelter moved from Cathedral Hall to our new premises in Vauxhall Bridge Road. It has been a very busy year for us not only with regards to clients but also, dealing with the teething problems of the building. Many people keep asking us: - ‘Has the atmosphere changed?’ The answer to this question is ‘No’ Thanks to the staff and volunteers who have made sure the atmosphere we had at Cathedral Hall would never disappear - they packed everything very carefully including the ‘atmosphere’ and moved it into the new premises.

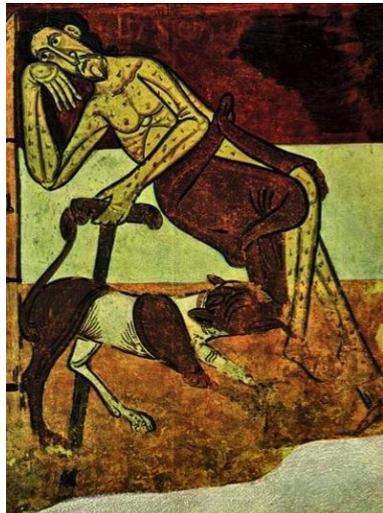
Sister Mary Barry PSMG a night shelter worker wrote.

“Daniel was admitted to the night shelter one night in a very distressed state. He had a restless night and many cups of coffee. About 2.30 a.m. I said to him: - ‘Another cup of coffee Daniel?’ ‘No’ he said, ‘but I would like a conversation,’ That ensued, and sleep came - eventually. After a short stay with us, accommodation was found for Daniel. About a week later, Daniel was back in the queue. ‘Whatever happened Daniel?’ I said disappointedly. ‘Nothing’ he said, ‘I just came back to hear my name called - Daniel’ That was the need of the moment”.

The Passage today We put a lot of effort into supporting people to the point where they can live on their own again. Some might say live independently. None of us live independently; we all depend on our family and friends. Our work goes on beyond someone moving to their own flat; we ensure that they can keep in touch with their previous workers, through the chaplaincy, mentoring and through a volunteer scheme Home for Good. We all need to be called by our name.

Lord all we have comes from you. Make us conscious that we can always spare something to help those in need. We can give from our material goods and from our time. Remind us that each person we encounter is an individual created and loved by you. May we always have time to keep in touch and to call each person by their name. Amen

“There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen who feasted sumptuously every day.”
- Luke 16:19



“At [the rich man's] gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores.”
- Luke 16:20-21

Forty Years of The Passage a Lenten Journey Day 15 Lent Friday Week 2 Passage 1994/95

The level of homelessness this year continued to be a major issue, particularly in London, but the government rough sleepers' initiative was helping us to get people off the streets. Our housing work had grown steadily from Sr Paula Sheehan starting as the housing and resettlement worker to The Passage employing a separate resettlement worker. With government support, the team grew to two housing workers and three resettlement workers. Having set a firm foundation to the work, Sr Paula Sheehan's time at The Passage came to an end and we were joined by Sr Rosalie Crowley DC. The extract from the annual report is by the resettlement team: -

“After clients fill in their application forms with one of the Housing Workers, there is a stressful waiting period whilst their applications are being processed. However, this stress does not end when they receive their offer of accommodation - this is when a Resettlement Worker steps in. Resettlement is not simply a case of getting people into their homes, it is about providing people with enough support before, during and after their move, so that the transition goes as smoothly as possible. We accompany clients to housing interviews and viewings, provide detailed advice and preparation before the move including connecting utilities, getting a new doctor, etc., explanation of the tenancy, help apply for furniture grants, liaise with housing associations, Councils and the Benefits Agency and practical help with transport, decorating, carpet laying. After the move we keep in touch through visiting and running groups for resettled clients. We have had discussions on dealing with loneliness, coping with bills, cooked meals together, had visiting speakers such as a dietician and social events such as ten-pin bowling. We have started to use resettlement volunteers because of the large numbers of clients we help.”

Today at The Passage several teams are successors to the housing and resettlement team. In 1995 one team looked after housing and resettlement for the whole organisation including the Night Shelter. For those now in our hostels, the hostel will help with the move and keep in touch afterwards. Housing is dealt with by a housing solutions services team and our private rented sector team. All this is underpinned by longer term support through our Home for Good scheme which, as we found in 1995, is only possible with the support of volunteers. Might you be called to help as well either as a volunteer or with the material help needed when someone moves into their own flat. We pray: -

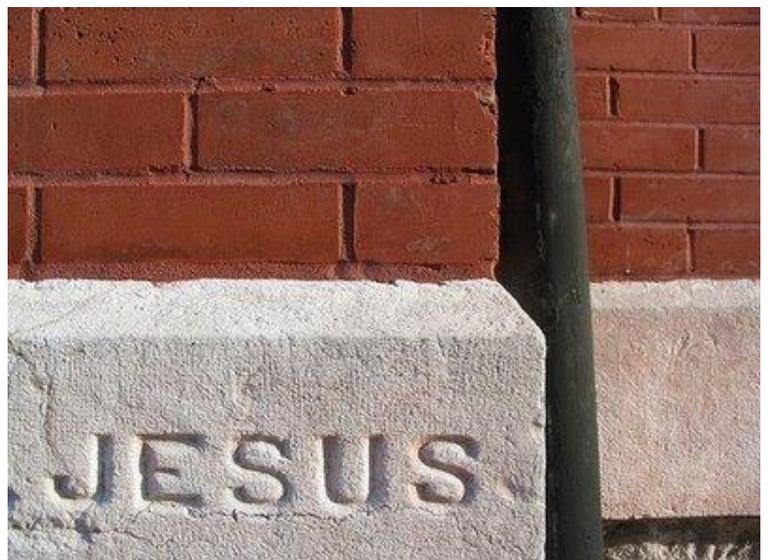
Heavenly Father we pray for all those moving from homelessness into accommodation. Help them to cope with the challenges both material and to overcome loneliness and isolation. Send The Passage the resources to give people ongoing support so that we can help people to truly move home for good. Amen

Matthew 21 :42-44

Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the scriptures:

‘The stone, that the builders rejected,
has become the cornerstone;
this was the Lord’s doing,
and it is amazing in our eyes’?

Therefore, I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom. The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.”



Forty Years of The Passage a Lenten Journey Day 16 Lent Saturday Week 2 Passage 1995/96

The splendidly illustrated 1995/96 report was produced professionally at no cost to The Passage by C&FD. Adrienne Leman, their chairman, is still helping with our graphic design as a volunteer 25 years later. There were three very significant issues: the shortness of the remaining lease on the Night Shelter as the site approaches redevelopment, the creation of the open learning room and the development of the health team.

Several activities had encouraged client activity and return to work over the years. The job club had had considerable success with helping people return to work and in 1995/96 assisted over 100 people back to work. This was complimented by the Open Learning Room. As society moved towards much greater use of IT the homeless people using the centre needed the opportunity to access IT. Sr Deirdre Lloyd DC joined the staff and with three volunteers made facilities available for clients to use a PC, many for the first time. She was surprised by the popular uptake of the room. Bjorn a full-time volunteer wrote "I feel very privileged to have become part of the community of the open learning room. It is a community because as people have expanded their skills, interest, and confidence they have been eager to share this experience with others. Thus, the open learning room creates a positive energy that seems to feed upon itself."

Following, the appointment of Marie Winters as an alcohol worker in 1990, our development of work for those with addictions and mental health issues had depended on the excellent contribution of outside agencies. Kevin Folwell, who had more general duties in the day centre, took an interest in mental health. Sister Bridie was heavily involved in lobbying the Department of Health (DoH) as so many of the people using both the day centre and the night shelter were affected by mental health problems or issues with addiction. This year saw the DoH provide funding so that a team of two mental health workers and two substance misuse workers could be employed. The funding was provided for three years under a scheme to encourage pilot projects. Unfortunately, it cannot be renewed.

Today at The Passage many of the people we assist continue to suffer from mental health issues, substance misuse issues or both. We continue to need the expertise of in-house specialists and access to outside agencies. Your Lenten sacrifice today may help make this work possible. For those needing specialist support the way forward can be bleak without that help.

Today our reading is the well know parable of the prodigal son. Let us think of times in our lives when we have gone our own way more intent on pleasure than serving the Lord.

Heavenly Father Let this Lent bring us back as we contemplate the face of Christ in the poor. Amen

