



Saint Mary's Giving

We all derived a great deal of pleasure in selecting, wrapping and delivering our gifts on Gift Sunday for mothers and young children who are all in very difficult circumstances. As with our Harvest gifts there has been a tremendous response from the congregation and those gifts were delivered to A Way Out and to the Stockton Women's Refuge. The Harvest produce was also shared with The Moses Project and our monthly food collection is passed on to them. We have received letters of thanks from all of these groups and it is clear that they appreciate not only the gifts but also the knowledge that people from outside their group care for and support the work they are doing.

Other than these group expressions of occasional giving, many of us support our own preferred charities, be they local, national or international, and St Mary's also gives 10% of its normal income (£2,520 last year) for good works outside the parish. Last year, the External Giving committee recommended that we give money to *The Moses Project*, *A Way Out*, *The Parish Church* (for its refugee work) *Stockton Street Pastors*, *Our Mission Partners*, *Wycliffe Bible Translators*, *Justice First*, *SENSE* (helping blind and deaf children), and *Christian Aid* (for Ebola relief). Here is a brief summary of the work the local organisations are doing:

The Moses Project - The project provides daily support, mentoring and activities for hundreds of local men who have become disengaged from society, perhaps because of their addictions or unforeseen circumstances such as unemployment or mental illness. Advisors accompany the men to appointments, ensuring punctual attendance and that they receive appropriate advice and understand the options made available to them. Very importantly, the Moses Project provides the men with a place to eat and enjoy fellowship with their peers, simply sitting around a table and chatting like any normal family. They share problems and receive daily support from Brian Jones and his team.

A Way Out - A Way Out is an outreach and prevention charity based in Stockton-on-Tees, working with the most vulnerable and at risk individuals, seeking to empower and equip them to find a way out of life-limiting and life-controlling situations. They specialise in engaging vulnerable and hard to reach women and young people, using creative and innovative approaches to educate, support and empower them to live safe, healthy and whole lives. Service users include women and young people with substance misuse problems, trapped in prostitution, homeless or living on the streets, involved in offending or victims of abuse.

Stockton Parish Church – People are fleeing religious and other persecution in many countries and on arrival in the UK these people are distributed around the UK. The Iranian refugees are sent to Stockton and the Parish Church, under the guidance of Rob Bailey, is trying to help them to settle in a new country, gain citizenship, learn English and become employable. There is a strong Iranian Christian community now based at SPC and a weekly service in Farsi is drawing more non Christians into the community.

Stockton Street Pastors - The Town Pastors are a group of Christian volunteers who work alongside the local police to alleviate trouble and distress on Friday and Saturday nights in Stockton High Street. Their strap-line is 'Care and Compassion in the Night-Time Environment'. The group have been doing this good work for six years and emphasise that their work is sustained by prayer and now extends beyond Friday and Saturday nights.

Our Mission Partners - Sarah Peters: came to see us with John Lambert on 5th July before she went to Romania to work on a Christian project there. We supported her with £400 towards her costs and Sarah will come to update us in person when she returns to the UK.

The Burgess Family: moved from the UK to live in Peru in September 2007. They live in Chorrillos, South Lima, and lead Oikos Ministries, whose vision is to plant churches throughout Peru and beyond. In the last two years 10 native Peruvian students have been in their discipleship and leadership school. They have seen character maturity and huge spiritual growth through investing time and training into these students, who predominately come from homes where there are little resources. Moving into the third year, there are some emerging church planters who should be ready in 2-3 years time. They need to equip these students with business and administration skills so that long

term they may be self-sustaining as pastors and leaders. For next year they need sponsorship for 10 of the 12 students to cover their food and lodgings. Sponsor 1 student for 1 week: £16 or £63 for 1 month.

“You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.” 2 Corinthians 9.11

Christmas Day at the Moses Project



Thank you to everyone who donated food and clothing to the Moses Project for their Christmas celebrations. All donations were gratefully received. The main Wilton companies also raised a goodly sum of money to help purchase the necessary food, decorations etc. The centre not only provided Christmas lunch for those who regularly use the centre - men with drug and alcohol dependency issues - but also for anyone and families that would have been on their own for Christmas. Around two hundred people attended and as you can see from the photograph courtesy of The Gazette the men had a great time.

Janet and John Taylor volunteered to help out and reported that they had had a good time and that the atmosphere was lovely. A professional chef was there and the food, three courses, was amazing. The usual clientele were downstairs - lots came. There were also many helpers to talk to them. Upstairs was set out for families and older folk. It was beautifully set out. There were balloon animals, crackers etc. Although there were three other lunches in Stockton that day over 70 people came along. People had been so generous with gifts, there were boxes from local churches including our donations of enough socks for all the guys and donations from individuals and local businesses. Brian Jones is obviously well known and appreciated.

Brian Jones visited St Mary's on Sunday 10th January to personally thank us for our support over the year and to share another remarkable story with us about a man who has come to Jesus from a background of extreme dependency. Their work goes on and our giving box remains in church with food and other donations taken to The Moses Project at the end of each month.