



COMPANIONS

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Dear Companion,

Happy New Year and welcome to 2021

Christmas Round-Up

A huge thank you to everyone for supporting our endeavours over Christmas - always a busy time for the Companions. Circumstances meant that our normal suppliers for the Christmas parcels could not donate clothes to the different regions. However, this did not stand in our way. The Winter Warmer Campaign was launched and many CoM, friends and family were extremely generous in donating to this campaign.

In the event, a record 806 parcels (a total of 15,314 items) of men's and women's clothes and toiletries were made up in St Joseph's hall by our volunteers. The parcels were then delivered by drivers to 14 different centres - Inverness in the North, Bristol in the West, Colchester in the East and London in the South. That's a lot of cardboard boxes and spreadsheets, thank you everybody!



Meanwhile other teams of volunteers were busy making 65 Christmas wreaths for the OSJCT Care Homes (delivered with chocolates for the staff), providing decorations and 25 festooned trees to the RHC, as well as decorating an extraordinary 180 mini-Christmas trees for each of the elderly residents in our 'tea party' care homes. Beautiful presents to brighten their rooms, it was a triumph of teamwork and hugely appreciated by the recipients (see below).

Thank you also to everyone who at super short notice, between national lockdown ending on the Monday and the introduction of Tier 4, who helped arrange the most fabulous annual Carol Service. Just what we all needed, stunning singing, Christmas readings and a shared moment of prayer together in Spanish Place, with a team of volunteers cleaning the pews and ensuring a COVID safe evening. A big thank you to Father David for travelling to join us and Fr Christopher too for his unstinting support.

But our work did not stop there over the festive season. Thanks to all the teams who have kept our Cafes on Mondays and Thursdays at Spanish Place going for the homeless, albeit for reduced numbers to ensure a safe environment. Though, by running our fabulous Christmas dinners over 2 evenings, we managed to entertain most comers. Equally, thanks to the new teams of volunteers who are running our Tuesday evening dinners for those locally in need at East Hill, Wandsworth.

Special mention as well to the stalwarts who kept Golden Square open on a

daily basis from Christmas through to New Year, taking in a dozen or so rough sleepers for morning coffee (with croissants and daily newspapers) and then a delicious hot lunch, filling something of the gap left by the absence of Crisis and others from central London this year.

Given that our usual supplies of sandwiches and other foodstuffs have all but stopped due to the disappearance of EAT and the lockdown, our new army of cooks and chefs that are supplying each of these projects and your subs that are paying for the ingredients are beyond value.

So, thank you to all our amazing volunteers, cooks and contributors, whether it has been through attending in person, donating to the Winter Warmer Campaign or Carol Service appeal, your kind emails of support and all your prayers.

Looking Ahead

A timely reminder I hope that Thursday 11th February is **Companions Day** (and of course the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes). Please be sure again to include our work in your prayers and above all remember those we try to help. In addition, it's a great chance to spread the word. A notice in your parish newsletter along the following lines would be great.

Also, thanks to one of our Chaplains, Fr Edmund Montgomery, who will record a short video for the occasion, with a text and commentary. Details to follow shortly.

Just in, as well, the new **'Faith in Action'** 2021 wristband, if you would like one (to wear or help recruit a friend) please drop Annie a line.

Sadly, with the significant increase in the number of Covid cases, particularly in London, we have decided that, for the greater safety of both our guests and volunteers, we should, just now, temporarily suspend our evening suppers at Spanish Place.

We will continue to monitor the situation and will resume our service as soon as we can safely do so, which hopefully will not be too far away. Takeaways from East Hill continue though, as does Breakfast at Golden Square serving

exclusively rough sleepers. And, of course, the Hub at Brompton Oratory, arranging supplies of clothing and other needs to those rough sleepers now housed in hotels and hostels.

On a happier note, we will soon be launching our Easter programme, with cards, Lourdes gifts and renewed outreach to our tea party contacts, other London care homes including the RHC and all our OSJCT Care Homes.

You will of course be kept fully informed by all the usual means, including now, thanks to Philippa, the regular Limelight update which I hope you are finding useful.

Here's to a successful and more promising 2021. Thank you as ever for all your wonderful support.

God bless,

Paul Letman
Chair, CoM

Charles Nicholson
Dep Chair, CoM