

St Martin-in-the-Fields: The 81st Vicar's Christmas Appeal

BBC Radio 4 Sunday 2nd December 2007, 7.55am and 9.27pm and Thursday 6th December at 3.27pm. BBC Radio 4 will also broadcast 'Received with Thanks', a programme about the Appeal, on Sunday 3rd December at 9.45am and 5.40pm and Thursday 7th December at 3.45pm.

Sleeping on the streets is never safe. One man thought he had found a quiet corner. He was woken by a group of people on their way home after a night out in the West End. One kicked him and he thought he was going to get beaten up. But instead another man stood over him and weeded on him whilst the others in the group laughed. It's a long slow process building self-esteem, and it can be destroyed in a moment. Building self-esteem is probably the most important thing done by The Connection at St Martin's.

A young girl came to see me last week. She had left home and wasn't yet eighteen but had been living in London five months. But now her money had run out. So she came into The Connection who helped her contact her parents, and after a series of conversations she decided to go home and try again.

Sometimes it takes longer to rebuild broken lives. A drug addict made no progress because she couldn't kick the habit. She had lost her family and home. After a spell in prison she came back to The Connection to make a new start. A year on, she's now in a hostel and is getting the support she needs to really kick her habit.

Half the money raised by this Christmas Appeal will help 6,000 people through The Connection at St Martin's, most of whom feel as though no-one else cares enough to look them in the eye and treat them as people. The other half helps people in urgent need, all over the UK, through The Vicar's Relief Fund. For a vulnerable young woman from Scotland, £200 greatly reduced her rent arrears and stopped her eviction. A thank you letter said, "Your grant helped her realise that people are willing to help".

So often we don't look people in need in the eye. To do so and make a difference this Christmas, please give now by calling freephone 0800 082 82 84. That's 0800 082 82 84. The lines are open now.

Or you can send a cheque to the St Martin-in-the-Fields Christmas Appeal, Trafalgar Square, London WC2N 4JJ. That's St Martin-in-the-Fields Christmas Appeal, Trafalgar Square, London WC2N 4JJ. If your donation is eligible for Gift Aid, please remember to tell us.

Thank you and have a very Happy Christmas.



Nicholas Holtam
Vicar