



THE COMPANIONS OF THE ORDER OF MALTA, OXFORD

Newsletter, January 2016 (IV.1)

Christmas lunch with the Oxford Companions

On the Saturday before Christmas a dozen volunteers of the Oxford Companions, joined by volunteers from the Oxford Oratory SVP, invited the homeless people of Oxford to join them for a Christmas lunch at the St Giles church hall. This is the second time that we have run this special lunch and this year we were able to serve about forty guests. The three course meal consisted of tomato and red pepper soup, huge portions of turkey with all the trimmings, and apple pie. (*continued inside*)



Homeless outreach expands with extra soup runs

In Michaelmas term we were able to expand the 'soup run', a project during which volunteers deliver soup, sandwiches, and hot drinks to the homeless on the streets, from four to six runs a week with the addition of lunchtime distributions on Friday and Wednesday. Because of these additional runs we have been able to serve about 500 people over 40 evening and lunchtime runs. That means that we have given out over 500 sandwiches, about 40 litres of tea and coffee and about 70 litres of soup! This has been possible because of the large number of active and energetic volunteers we have managed to recruit this year. Even into 8th week, at the end of term when the student body's energy tends to be low, all our runs have been able to go ahead. Our thanks for everyone's hard work over the term and let's hope we can have an even more productive term in the New Year!

United effort to serve second annual Christmas lunch

(continued from front cover)

Ann Bailey of the SVP provided the soup whilst Mark Gardner, the chef from the Oxford Oratory, prepared the turkey and the pudding. Volunteers both served the guests and sat with them for a chat and to pull Christmas crackers. We received forty special Christmas present-bags from Companions HQ to give out to all of our guests, containing hats, gloves and other useful things, as well as chocolates. The committee are particularly grateful for the assistance of Pia Jolliffe, who headed up much of the organisation for the event. We are also very appreciative of the support of the Fathers of the Oratory who allowed us to use their parish rooms and kitchen to prepare everything (and especially to the Provost of the Oratory, Fr Daniel Seward, who came to help serve and said grace before the meal began). The lunch would not have been possible without the financial assistance we received through the generosity of the Hoper Dixon Trust, the St Aloysius Conference of the SVP, and the students and staff of the Oxford Institute of Population Ageing.

Vital statistics from last term:

- c.500 people served by soup run
- c.350 sandwiches, and 70 litres of soup distributed
- c.100 people served by Companions Cafe
- c.200 guests at the Saturday homeless project



Home visits now up and running!

We are very pleased this term to have started making home visits to the elderly and housebound. Volunteers make visits in pairs to provide simple company and conversation, to share a smile and a laugh with those who might otherwise miss the human contact which many of us can take for granted. We starting small to make sure that our system works, but with volunteers keen to take up the activity we are looking forward to expanding our work of companionship in the coming terms.

For more information, or if you are interested in helping: contact Daniel Mullens (St Hugh's).

Thank you to all our friends and benefactors, who make our work possible, and to the following organisations, who supported us last term:

THE
HOPER DIXON
TRUST



ACTIVITY UPDATES

Outreach to the elderly

The 'Companions Café' is running as ever at Isis House during term-time. Volunteers serve tea and coffee, as well as cakes to residents. The Café gives volunteers a good and natural environment in which to chat to residents and we are starting to become familiar with them. Special thanks to Chanice, from the Orders of St John Care Trust, who has coordinated with us to put on several special events, including a Christmas party (see photo on opposite page)! The Companions Café operates weekly in term, whilst individual visits to residents of Isis House are also organised. As noted elsewhere, home visits to housebound parishioners from St Aloysius parish are also now happening.

For more information, or if you are interested in helping, contact Tom Scrope (St Benet's)

Homeless outreach

This aspect of our work centres around two projects: mobile soup and sandwich distribution on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday, and a drop-in centre on Saturday lunchtime based at St Giles' Church Hall (which operates all year round). Volunteers both help directly serving and chatting to guests as well with all the behinds the scenes work, such as making all the sandwiches to distribute. We are expecting a surge in uptake with our projects due to recent changes to the services that the council offers for the homeless, so we can never have too many volunteers!

For more information, or if you are interested in helping, contact Nathan Pinkoski (Teddy Hall).

Special educational needs outreach

There are exciting events coming up with our SEN children & youths project this coming term: we will taking groups of children to visit exhibitions at the Ashmolean museum (Tuesdays of I, III, & IV) from 10am-12pm. Our partner for the project is Steve Pratley from Flash of Splendour Arts, an award winning charity that makes fine arts available for children and youths with special educational needs. If you are free on any of these days do get in touch. The project is great fun for volunteers as well as for the children, and it is good experience of dealing with those with special educational needs.

For more information, or if you are interested in helping, contact Sina Fackler (Kellogg)

FOR THE DIARY

27th January
(Wednesday II)

22nd February
(Monday VI)

7th March
(Monday VIII)

Training evening: "Serving the homeless"
8pm, Oxford University Catholic Chaplaincy

Talk: "Living Christian charity in the Order"
Mgr. John Armitage
7pm (details tbc)

Mass and Termly Dinner
7pm (details tbc)

ABOUT THE COMPANIONS

The Companions of the Order of Malta, Oxford are students from Oxford University who offer their time and energy to serve the poor and the marginalised in Oxford, according to the charism and traditions of the Order of Malta.

The Order of Malta is the world's oldest charitable organisation and operates in over 120 countries. It is a religious order of the Roman Catholic Church, giving its charitable and humanitarian work a distinctive and powerful character.

The Oxford branch of the Companions was started in Michaelmas 2011 by Fra' John Eidinow, and works with the elderly and homeless in the city. The branch is composed of fully-subscribed members (annual subscription £10) and volunteer members.

The British Association of the operates in Britain as registered charity no. 1103567.

COMMITTEE

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The Committee meets at least fortnightly in Term and periodically in Vacation. The last meeting of each Term is a General Meeting which all subscribed members are welcome to attend.

CONTACT

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