

St
Martin
in
the
Fields

BBC
RADIO

4

CHRISTMAS
APPEAL

Page 8

*The Revd Dr Sam Wells on what
your support means for St Martin's
Charity, and the challenges ahead...*



Together

Helping homeless and vulnerably housed people



“Life’s looking up”

How one grant helped Austin turn his life around...



“Having my own place will be like getting my freedom back, really.”

Austin’s story...

When Austin’s mum heard him talking about his life on Radio 4 last Christmas, she phoned him in tears, overwhelmed by how far he’d come. We caught up with him to find out how life is looking now, as he prepares for the next chapter.

Just two years ago, Austin was sleeping rough in a churchyard. A motorbike accident had left him with serious injuries – and living with ongoing pain,

he’d become depressed and started drinking. Eventually, one thing led to another and Austin lost his job and his home. Luckily, Austin heard about a

support organisation in Cornwall called St Petrocs, who found him temporary accommodation and helped him quit drinking. But an unpaid housing debt was threatening his future. That’s where the Vicar’s Relief Fund stepped in. A small grant of £85 bought Austin a passport, meaning he could access support services to help him clear his debts and find a stable home.

Turning the page

“Life’s looking up,” Austin smiles. “I’ve been offered a new-build flat, I’ve got light at the end of the tunnel.” Despite still struggling with his injuries, he’s volunteering as a homeless health advocate, and he’s passionate about helping other people who have fallen on hard times. “I tell them what I’ve been through – we’ve all got our own horror stories. It’s giving a bit back isn’t it?”

“I took someone for an appointment, and he said he wouldn’t have made it without me.

It’s giving a bit back, isn’t it?”

During the pandemic, Austin also helped provide food for people in temporary accommodation. The long-term impact of the VRF grant is something he’s very aware of, and grateful for.

“It’s changed my life. St Petrocs gave me security and that grant I got off you gave me an identity. Without it, I wouldn’t be doing what I’m doing and helping other people out. It’s amazing for just £85 really. You get a little help somewhere, and it can lead to bigger things in the future. Just look at the difference of what I’m doing now.”



A little means a lot

As a former Supported Accommodation Manager, Dave Brown knows how vital the right support can be.

Giving people the chance to get back on their feet and feel in control is a crucial step to building a more secure future.

“It’s a comparatively small amount, but it does an awful lot.”

“We need a lot of tools to do our job, and the Vicar’s Relief Fund comes out of the shed a lot,” he explains. “It’s helped so many people across the UK.”

“Sometimes it’s the money to get their own place, sometimes it pays for an ID. In short, it’s the money they need to survive and get on in the world.”

Thanks to you, our work hasn't stopped...

Over the past 18 months, you have shown incredible generosity and compassion for the most vulnerable in our communities. You've allowed our work not just to continue but to grow, as more and more people have been impacted by the pandemic. Thank you for helping to change lives and bring hope for the future across the UK. Here's a taster of what we've achieved together.



Photograph by Marc Gascoigne

The Vicar's Relief Fund

As Austin found, a grant from the VRF can be life-changing – even the smallest amount can help prevent eviction or secure accommodation. And they usually take just a couple of days to arrange.

When Covid hit in 2020, your generous donations meant that the VRF and Emergency Fund could make 8,388 awards – totalling £2.8m – to support people in urgent need.

Both the first and second waves of Covid put so many people at risk of homelessness, but throughout everything, your ongoing generosity and kindness allowed us to offer more immediate, life-changing grants.



Frontline Network



You're helping support frontline staff from organisations across the UK working with people experiencing homelessness.

The pandemic has made it more challenging than ever for people to access services such as healthcare, welfare and education.

But each challenge has been met with incredible collaboration from frontline staff as they've worked tirelessly to break down these barriers for good.

"It's the sharing of ideas which is what it's about really, to benefit everyone, which is so helpful."

Nick, Frontline Worker for a housing charity in Sussex



Photograph by Marc Gascoigne

The Connection

With your help, staff at The Connection have gone above and beyond to continue to find safe accommodation for people – offering support by phone, Zoom and, where possible, in person.

Covid closed The Connection's main doors at the start of 2020, but the team continued providing support at two hotels, offering shelter for people experiencing homelessness during the pandemic.



Now the doors are open again. And they've partnered with the NHS to ensure that people sleeping rough can receive vaccinations at their day centre.

11,684

people given the chance of a fresh start by you through VRF grants

5,187

awards given to help people secure accommodation

£15,470

awarded to provide training to vital frontline workers

1,111

people supported by The Connection in 2020/21

9,000+

applications for VRF grants received over the last year

End of the eviction ban: 11% of all renters worried about eviction in the next three months

Joseph Rowntree Foundation | May 2021

At least 130,000 households in England made homeless in pandemic

The Guardian | June 2021

Photograph by Marc Gascoigne

Your act of kindness can change the future...

Your support over the past 18 months has been unwavering, and everyone at St Martin-in-the-Fields Charity is very grateful for your kindness.

Now, we've reached a watershed moment in the pandemic. More and more of us have received the vaccine, and life is slowly opening up again. But there

are also many unanswered questions about the long-term impacts on the most vulnerable in our communities, and potential new challenges to face.

My reason for giving

Maureen and Ewan have been supporters of St Martin's Charity for many years, initially donating to our BBC Radio 4 Christmas Appeal. Since working as a psychiatrist for the NHS, Maureen is particularly passionate about the impact that experiencing homelessness can have on people's mental health.

"I've always felt that the way in which the money is used is very grounded. People need homes, food and guidance as to how to get out of their problems. Very practical, important things in peoples' lives."

The new challenges ahead

Lockdown restrictions exacerbated housing insecurity and homelessness, with the forced closure of frontline services and a sudden impact on income from lost work. By the end of 2020, almost 100,000 households were living in temporary accommodation.

And with the ban on evictions having ended in May, it's feared that even more people will be at risk – not just of losing their home, but of the additional health and welfare impacts.

Will you give a monthly gift?

Your gifts can give people a chance of a stable home – and the ongoing network they need to find work and access education and healthcare. A chance to build a secure future for themselves.

By supporting St Martin's Charity, you are already helping people move away from homelessness. And with a regular monthly gift, you can help offer a safety net every month of the year.

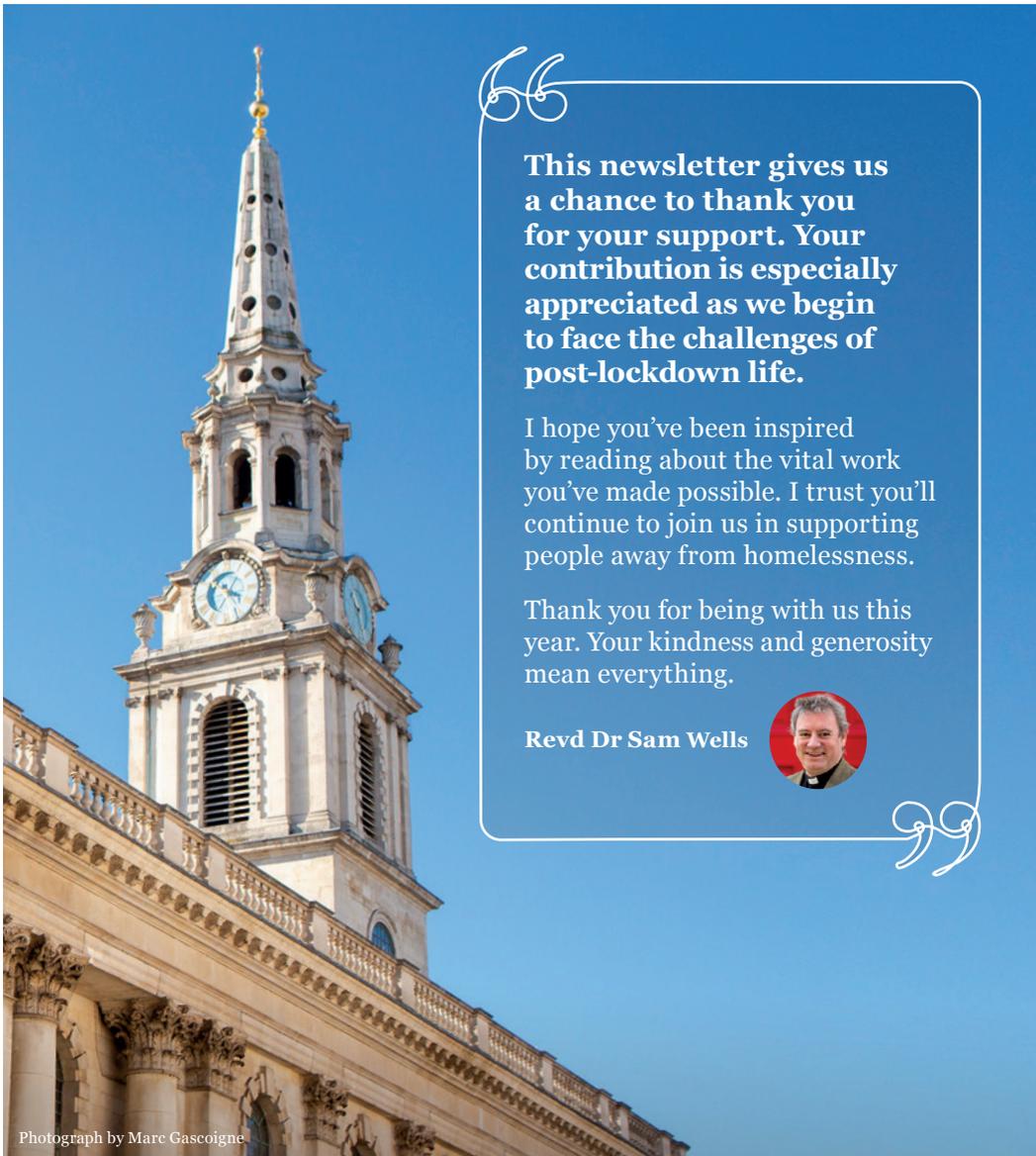
A regular gift could help change a life, every month.

£10 a month
could help get someone ID so they can rent a property.

£20 a month
could help someone clear their rent arrears and avoid eviction.

Please use the donation form enclosed to set up your monthly gift today. Thank you.





Photograph by Marc Gascoigne



This newsletter gives us a chance to thank you for your support. Your contribution is especially appreciated as we begin to face the challenges of post-lockdown life.

I hope you've been inspired by reading about the vital work you've made possible. I trust you'll continue to join us in supporting people away from homelessness.

Thank you for being with us this year. Your kindness and generosity mean everything.

Revd Dr Sam Wells



A legacy of lasting change

One very special way you can support our long-term work is with a gift in your will. If you'd like to know more, please either [email](#) or phone our team for a chat, or tick the box on your donation form with no obligation. We know it's an important and personal decision. But it's also a chance for you to leave a legacy that will help bring lasting change.

Call 020 3795 5745 **Email** rebecca.pearce@stmartinscharity.org.uk
Or tick the box on your donation form to request more information