



A time for giving

This has been a tough year for charities. As budgets are squeezed, income is falling. At the same time, demand has never been greater. We hear from a selection of high-profile Christian advocates about the charities they each support – and why, this Christmas, people should consider doing the same



Jospice is a hospice for the terminally ill in Liverpool, north-west England, founded by the late Fr Francis O'Leary. Cherie Blair, a barrister and campaigner, is a vice-president
 I feel I've been involved in

Jospice for almost as long as I can remember. Growing up in Liverpool and going to school in Crosby, I certainly remember the founder, Fr O'Leary, and the early days of Jospice. Each time I visit, I am struck by its wonderful atmosphere and the real emphasis on the dignity of every person.

Fr O'Leary used the motto "giving dignity to the individual" and I can assure you that each and every patient is treated as an individual, and is cared for with love and the utmost respect during their final days or hours of life.

Jospice started 50 years ago caring for destitute people who were dying in the streets of Pakistan, and although Jospice is still continuing this work in several underdeveloped countries, it now also runs the oldest and largest hospice on Merseyside. That's recently undergone major modernisation and can now care for 29 terminally ill people at any one time. But the charity is still committed to, and financially supports, the same work in its hospices and clinics in Honduras, Guatemala, Ecuador and Peru.

I know that Jospice has experienced a distinct fall in income this year, along with many other charities. To give you some idea of what the money pays for, Jospice in Liverpool costs £5 per minute to run, while at the children's feeding clinic in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, £2 can feed a child for a week. Perhaps people don't realise how little money can make a difference. Like the small amounts that most of us spend on newspapers, for example.



Mary's Meals was inspired by Marian devotion, its mission to provide daily meals for the world's poorest children. Duncan Bannatyne, an entrepreneur who regularly appears on the BBC's Dragons' Den, is a supporter

This is a very important Scottish charity. There are so many children around the world that benefit from its help and, with the right support and funding, it can help even more. The founder Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow is

one of the most inspirational people I've ever met, and the work done by the charity is crucial as it helps the most needy and has improved the lives of so many children.

● jospice.org.uk or call 0151 924 3812.



Anchor House is a Catholic homeless shelter in east London. Julie Etchingam, presenter, ITV News at Ten, is a patron

Fifty years ago, Anchor House in Canning Town was a mission for seafarers cast ashore in London's thriving docklands with no home to go to. Now it cares for those buffeted by very different storms, in an area struggling with some of the worst levels of poverty in Britain. Its work saves lives – and I'm proud to be one of its patrons. It gives shelter to those with no home and seemingly little hope. Drug addicts, gamblers, ex-offenders. The jobless, the joyless. And, bit by bit, it turns those lives round.

The men and women who come through its doors are given a safe, warm place to sleep – and crucially, a chance to reassess and rebuild their lives. Care and compassion are a given in Anchor House – but so, too, is practical help. There is education and training available to everyone – and everyone is expected to take advantage of it. It is a hand up, not a handout, in action.

In such hard times, the members of the team at Anchor House need financial support as never before. They're just embarking on a hugely ambitious plan to improve their building and grow their work. They refuse to pass by on the other side – and throw the challenge down to all of us to do the same.

● www.anchorhouseuk.org; 020 7476 6062.

Marie Curie Cancer Care cares for the terminally ill in the last days of their lives. John Varley, former group chief executive of Barclays Bank and Tablet trustee, is its chairman

Total dedication to the care of people who are terminally ill is what makes Marie Curie Cancer Care stand out. The charity, of which I became chairman in March, is best-known for its nationwide network of Marie Curie Nurses who care for patients in their own homes, free of charge. They provide the practical nursing that is so essential to help people remain with their families at the end of their lives.

Marie Curie Nurses work at the bedside, often overnight, making sure that their patients are comfortable and that their families can rest knowing that their loved one is in safe hands. This work covers everything from ensuring patients have good pain control to listening to their fears and worries in the small hours. At this time of year, our nurses will be making it possible for many people to spend their last Christmas at home.

We also run nine Marie Curie Hospices across the United Kingdom. Marie Curie Cancer Care is a charity that really deserves our support – it cares about, and cares for, the sick and the dying. There is not much that is more important.

● www.mariecurie.org.uk or call 0800 716146.



The Jimmy Mizen foundation, a charity for young people, was founded after the murder of its 16-year-old namesake in south-east London in 2008. The Mizen family has spoken publicly about the importance of their Catholic faith in

responding to the tragedy of losing their son. Barry Mizen is Jimmy's father

We were determined we would not be beaten by what had happened, our family would not be further damaged or relationships broken up, and something good had to come out of the loss of our Jimmy for the common good. The foundation is involved in many different projects, but the main aim is the promotion of the good in young people.

We have supplied four minibuses, called "Jimmybuses", to voluntary organisations, mainly for the benefit of the young. We have opened a community-hub coffee shop, the Cafe of Good Hope, in Lewisham, south-east London, which we hope will help fund some of the charity's work. We aim to build on the



two Jimmy Mizen Apprenticeships already established to provide work experience placements for young people.

However, our primary focus is our awareness project, which my wife and I run. We visit many schools, prisons, youth groups and churches to tell Jimmy's story and discuss the issues that lead to the culture of confrontation, anger and violence that so blight our society, and we share our thoughts on some of the causes and solutions. We strive to bring peace and safety to our communities, and to question the assumption that ever-harsher punishment is the answer.

• www.jimmymizen.org or email barry@jimmymizen.org



The Cardinal Hume Centre, Victoria, central London, helps homeless young people. Fr Christopher Jamison OSB is a patron

A homeless or poorly housed person is an individual with many needs. The challenge is to meet all their needs, otherwise a neglected area of their lives can undermine other good work. What strikes me about the Cardinal Hume Centre is that it meets all a person's needs in one place. People can be housed in the hostel for a few months and also given housing advice; they can improve their skills for employment by taking the centre's IT and English courses; their health needs can be addressed at the on site NHS surgery. In addition, mothers with children can find support in the family centre.

Underpinning all this is Cardinal Hume's spirituality of a sanctuary rooted in the Benedictine tradition of hospitality. To help sustain this spirituality, my own community at Worth Abbey offers every member of staff an annual 24-hour stay in our retreat house, where they experience the monastic tradition of hospitality themselves. That spirituality helped to welcome 1,350 clients last year, of whom 750 were new to the centre.

In the current economic recession, these numbers will grow as more people fall into poverty and lose their homes.

• www.cardinalhumeccentre.org.uk or call 020 7222 1602.



Missio is the Church in England and Wales' charity supporting 1,200 poor and newly established dioceses across the world. Frank Cottrell Boyce, screenwriter and novelist, is a patron

Like most Catholics – certainly in the north-west of England – I grew up in a house where the Red Box was one of the fixtures and fittings. It lived on a shelf near the front door. It was occasionally pillaged for a bus fare. But it was always full when Mrs MacCauley – an intimidating woman who kept an even more intimidating parrot – came to empty it.

I knew the money was "for Africa" and I imagined that Mrs MacCauley took it there herself protected from lions and leopards by that terrifying parrot.



The Esther Benjamins Trust helps trafficked children in Nepal. Dame Helen Ghosh, Permanent Secretary at the Home Office and Tablet trustee, is a supporter

We only have one chance at a happy and fulfilled life, and for many children that chance is snatched away before they are even a few years old. So children's charities always get my vote, at home or abroad. With a passing plug for the Cabrini Children's Society, doing great work on family support, fostering and adoption in south London, I'd like to talk about the Esther Benjamins Trust, which works in Nepal with children who have been trafficked, particularly into circuses as

performers or other forced labour. Sometimes their families are tragically duped into believing that they are giving their child a chance of a better life.

The charity was founded by a former Gurkha officer in memory of his late wife. As well as carrying out risky rescue missions, the charity runs a couple of residential homes for the children who cannot be returned to their families for fear of re-trafficking, and offers craft training and support for schooling. It also works with children with hearing difficulties, who for cultural reasons are sometimes rejected by their families. It is a very inspiring, small-scale organisation, operating in a challenging political and geographical context.

• www.ebtrust.org.uk or call 020 7600 5654.



My belief that Mrs MacCauley was bopping back and forth between Liverpool and Africa made Africa feel near. And although I know now that she was only going as far as Freshfield, a few miles away, I haven't shaken the strong sense that we are all intimately connected, that poverty isn't far away and is my concern.

But Missio is asking us to share not just the fruit of our labours – but the tree from which they grow. Like most Catholics, I'm a lot more comfortable sharing my money or time than I am sharing my faith. I don't want to push a line. But as I've got older I've come to realise that there's something dishonest about this. We need to share the fullness of ourselves, reveal the source of our inmost strength.

Faith is a gift that is no respecter of wealth – it's something that the poorest can give to the richest, that a child can give to a grown-up. Missio offers the chance of genuine sharing, genuine dialogue, a place where all can meet as equals. So that's what Missio offers to me – a chance to share not just the fruits but the tree itself, the root.

● www.missio.org.uk or call 020 7821 9755.

St Cuthberts Care, based in the north-east of England, provides care homes for the disabled and for children suffering neglect or having special needs. Lady Elsie Robson, a nurse and teacher and the wife of the late Sir Bobby, the former England football manager, is a patron

I was aware of St Cuthberts Care for many years before I became actively involved. In 2001 my husband, Sir Bobby, became a patron of the charity. Following his death eight years later, I was asked to continue his work as patron. My time as a nurse and teacher in Catholic schools meant I had a natural affinity with St Cuthberts.

The charity specialises in work with the disabled and those with special needs. It tackles areas often considered unattractive or too high risk. For example, earlier this year it decided to provide facilities free of charge at its Alan Shearer Activity Centre. This means that families with disabled children from the most deprived areas of the North-East can use the centre as much as they choose, without any financial constraints. However, this means

the charity needs to raise a six-figure sum every year.

In these austere times, people want to know that when they give a charitable donation, their money is put to good use. St Cuthberts Care pays for all of its community activities through fund-raised money. Moreover, every penny goes straight to these community services, with the charity simply directing donated funds towards the areas of greatest need.

● www.stcuthbertscare.org.uk; 0191 228 0111.

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The Friends of Colombia for Social Aid helps some of the poorest children in Colombia. Baroness Hooper, Conservative peer and Tablet trustee, is the patron

The Friends of Colombia for Social Aid (Focsa) stands out because of the dedication of the trustees and members. They achieve Focsa's mission "to help improve the lives of the most disadvantaged children of Colombia by donating medical, educational and other necessary equipment to institutions that have been set up to help these children".

It is the careful selection of beneficiaries, the personal follow-up and the continuing contact that ensure that the money and equipment are used and maintained as effectively as possible. Although it is a small charity, last year £132,000 was raised, of which more

than £100,000 has already been spent on equipment to improve the diagnosis and medical treatment of children in Colombia.

I am proud to be and to have been the patron of Focsa for more than 20 years. It combines my interest in Latin America with the needs of children and the warm friendship of those who work so hard to help.

● www.friendsofcolombia.co.uk or call 07947 203596.



Progressio is an aid charity founded by lay Catholics 70 years ago. Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, Archbishop Emeritus of Westminster, is the president

The combination of practical development help and policy change combine in what the charity

calls "people powered development". Progressio works in 11 countries – countries that are recovering from conflict (East Timor, Somaliland), natural disasters (Haiti, Central America) or, like Zimbabwe and Malawi, dealing with a multitude of issues resulting from poverty, climate change or political instability.

Progressio is inspired by Catholic Social Teaching and it works to promote the teaching of the Church through publications and its Catholic Social Teaching website – this is an excellent resource for the Church not only here in Britain but around the world.

● www.progressio.org.uk or call 020 7354 0883.

HCPT – The Pilgrimage Trust organises pilgrimages to Lourdes for children with disabilities. The Bishop of Hallam, John Rawsthorne, is its president

Over the past 27 years, my involvement with HCPT as a group chaplain has brought me innumerable friends and constantly renewed my faith in the way in which God works in human beings. For young people, besides being a very serious contribution to their journey of faith, it is for many a first encounter with people with disability. The Pilgrimage Trust helps them recognise that the place of people with disability is at the heart of the Church.

● www.hcpt.org.uk or call 01788 564646.

■ **Compiled by Christopher Lamb and Sam Adams.**



The Passage, in central London, is a homeless centre. John Studzinski, financier and philanthropist, is a director I've been involved with the Passage for 30 years and a director for 15, and it still

strikes me as an extraordinary organisation. While I donate money to many charities, I focus on giving the Passage my time and access to my networks.

Homelessness could happen to any of us: there are four legs to the table of our lives –

health, home, loved ones and friends, and job – and many homeless people have seen at least two of those legs fall off. The Passage helps them rebuild their lives and their link with the rest of society. It's an extremely well-run charity – not wasting a penny and committed to working alongside bodies in the same space, rather than jostling for position.

In life, we all have a cross to bear, and we can choose either to drag it along or carry it in the service of God. Carrying it is easier – and that's one of my reasons for supporting the Passage.

● www.passage.org.uk or call 020 7592 1850.