**International Association of Charities**

**AIC UK - Part of the world wide Vincentian Family**

***ACTING TOGETHER – AGAINST ALL FORMS OF POVERTY***

AIC UK is part of a 150,000 strong International group of, primarily, women whose spirituality is rooted in Vincentian tradition. Begun in 1617 by St Vincent De Paul, the Confraternities of lay volunteers help the disadvantaged in society. Groups became the Ladies of Charity – a name that many countries still use today under the AIC umbrella. AIC GROUPS:

**ABBEY WOOD, BEXLEY, DARLINGTON, GLASGOW, MILL HILL and PECKHAM**.

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**CHRISTMAS NEWSLETTER 2015**

**In the bleak Mid-winter – A Christmas reflection from Sr Mary Timmons DC**



Listening to the plight of those whose homes and livelihoods have been damaged by Storm Desmond reminds us of how cruel winter can be. Let us remember those affected in our prayers at this time.

It is a busy time of year and it is difficult not to let the commercial side of Christmas dominate our lives. St Vincent was aware of this and advised the priests of the mission:

“Along with our possessions, we must also give up the attachment and love of possessions, and have no love for the perishable goods of this world. There is no merit in an exterior renunciation of goods, if we hold on to the desire to have them. God asks primarily for our heart…only our heart, and that’s what counts” (Coste 11 conf. 132)

This is aptly put in the third verse of a Christmas carol

What can I give Him, poor as I am? If I were a shepherd I would bring a lamb.

If I were a wise man, I would do my part.

Yet what I can I give Him,

Give my heart

So this Christmas time let us make an effort to respond to **His Great Gift of** **Himself to us in the Incarnation** by giving Him our hearts and allowing him to be the Lord of our life.

**CONSULTATION ON OUR NAME AND LOGO.**

The final result on 4th December 2015 of the consultation on a suitable name and logo for our organisation was that 80% of members voted to retain the present AIC UK name and logo, with a 4% abstention and 16% voting for a change of both. I reported previously on those comments voting for the retention of the present name and logo. There was a variety of responses subsequently which ranged from keeping the status quo because of international, national and local recognition to those who regretted the confusion and lack of clear identity which the current name and logo offered.

It is important to recall that the Association has come through several name changes in the past and survived, so we must not get stuck in thinking that what is current is best – in other words, avoiding change.

St Vincent’s charism has survived and is active - in a modern response to modern problems – not in its 17th century form, but moving with the “spirit of the age” – the zeitgeist – utilising it in each generation to improve the needs of people who live in poverty.

We have evolved from the St Vincent’s creation of 17th century Confraternities of Charity, through St Louise’s Ladies of Charity(17th to 20th century), through the UK foundation’s (1995) Vincentian Association to its present form; International Association of Charities the English translation of the French - Association International des Charities – using the acronym AIC. Suggestions for alternatives were; Vincentian Women, retaining Ladies of Charity, Vincentians in Action and a return to the Vincentian Association. Several people commented on the logo not reflecting any aspect of our charism or work.

It is clear that the majority of members wish the present name and logo to be used in the new AIC UK website presently being created. There is a difficulty in getting a UK or GB domain name for the website that reflects AIC – as many investment, agricultural and asbestos companies already own the best variations of the acronym. I will keep on trying to get the best result as we want to maximise the potential of the website for demonstrating our work, encouraging recruitment and highlighting our 400 years’ Vincentian legacy of volunteering for marginalised people.

**REFUGEE CRISIS** – the silhouette of the Holy Family as refugees is a poignant and timely reminder of the refuge they sought when they were most in need. AIC UK, as part of Vincentians in Partnership UK, in collaboration with other faith groups and civil society action group Citizens UK, have played our full part in an authentic result for vulnerable Syrian refugees. You will have read Marlene Burt and Dee Mansi’s reports throughout this past year of the efforts to move local and national government to understand the urgency of admitting those most in need. In the face of enormously mixed media attention to the plight of those in flight from war and deprivation, it is understandable there are those who are fearful of becoming involved. St Vincent never shirked involvement in social justice, and I am very pleased to say that our consistent support of this campaign has borne fruit in this Year of Mercy.



A Conservative Council; Barnet - in a Conservative Government undertook, on St Vincent’s Feast Day, 27th September and hearing of Vincent’s legacy - understood the lobby of our local North London action group composed of descendants of the Kindertransport refugee children of the Second World War, local Synagogue members, AIC/Vincentians in Partnership, Muslim Bravanese community, Syrian community and Muslim Middlesex University students. Our work over the following weeks, culminated on Sunday 13th December as a Welcome and Resettlement Board, to prepare for the reception of those arriving in January 2016. Please pray for a successful, peaceful and healing resettlement for these vulnerable refugees.

I wish you all every blessing for a peaceful, joyful Christmas and New Year.

Dee Mansi. AIC UK President