

## **Gregory Care Review of 2023 Activity & Outlook for 2024**

Gregory Care is St Gregory's charitable organisation. We serve all faiths and none within this Parish. Helping to elevate some of the struggles our local community face. It is a mammoth task and one which will never end but once again thanks to your care, support, and hard work we have been able to make those struggles less for some people.

In 2023 more parishioners were involved in the social care work of Gregory Care than in previous years. Everyone has something to give to support this work within our parish. Parishioners demonstrated their understanding of the immense need in our community and 'dug deep' to help in so many ways; generously giving their prayers, time, skills, financial and material contributions.

We would like to thank everyone in the parish for your ongoing commitment to the toiletry appeal and for your generosity over Christmas to our gift appeal. Also to everyone, we have approached for help, including PAT testing, gardening, delivering things to the housebound, wreath making, the Hospitality team, and everyone who has responded to our requests.

To date, there have only been two of us coordinating this work but we are now very happy to announce the coming on board of three new members, Daniel Davighi (who was already our Treasurer but is now taking on a more active "hands-on" role) Ciara Ingham and Siobhan Cramphorn. We look forward to what we will achieve this year with more than double the team!!

2023 was our busiest year to date. With the help and support of parishioners, we were involved in providing many more services to the church and local community.

### **Summary of Activity 2023**

#### **Work with schools**

Gregory Care has an ongoing dialogue with our two Catholic Schools: Thomas Becket and St Gregory's. They support us in our work and we support their school community. This year the children have made prayer cards and Easter cards for us to distribute and have supported the FoodStore which some of our families have benefitted from.

Gregory Care has supported families experiencing the challenges of the current economic situation by:

- providing school uniforms
- supporting families to meet transport costs thus enabling children to attend school
- financing residential trips for children who would otherwise miss out
- supplying food crisis bags.
- At Christmas, we provided toys, festive food, decorations, crackers and gifts to these families.

#### **Families and individuals**

We have worked with several families and individuals providing practical and material support, advice, guidance, and signposting.

Material support included:

- supplying furniture and other household appliances
- clothing
- toys
- specialist equipment
- food
- hygiene products

Practical support included:

- undertaking a gardening project to help improve a family's mental health and enable them to start growing their own vegetables.
- Just before Christmas, we were able to provide temporary accommodation to a couple who were homeless, this intervention enabled them to continue to work thus preventing their situation from becoming entrenched.

### **Asylum seekers**

We were fortunate enough to be able to support the community who were temporarily housed at the former Westone Hotel. We worked in partnership with other local churches, our contribution being the provision of clothes, a bicycle, baby equipment, wool and knitting needles, toys, and games.

### **Our Church Community**

We are increasingly aware that for various reasons; infirmity, illness, reduced mobility a number of our parishioners are not able to join us in person as often as they and we would like. Just because some people are not present in the congregation it does not mean their contribution to our church community is forgotten.

Over the past four years, we have tried to develop small gestures at key times in the Church year to 'keep in touch' with these people.

Last Easter we made and delivered Easter Gardens and goodie bags including prayer cards and sweet treats.

At Christmas, homemade wreaths and small gifts were distributed.

In May we organised (with help and support from the Hospitality Team) the 'Coronation Big Lunch' with games, crown making, and food. Delivering bags of goodies and flowers for the occasion to parishioners who were not able to join us in person.

At the end of summer, we sourced a range of new school uniform items and some good quality previously owned children's clothes which were made available to parishioners at no cost.

In December, due to the generosity of a parishioner from the Cathedral, we were able to hold a 'new clothes sale' enabling parishioners to buy branded clothes at a fraction of the shop price. Funds raised from this helped provide the Christmas celebration food given to our families.

### **The Cathedral FoodStore**

For the past three years, two members of Gregory Care have volunteered at the Cathedral Foodstore. During this time they have been instrumental in the Foodstore evolving from a food bank to a food larder. This has enabled our community to benefit initially from free food parcels, now they can purchase food of their choice at approximately 20% of the supermarket cost with the safety net of free crisis food bags available when the need arises.

Thank you for reading this and for your continued support, we hope it has given you more insight into the work of Gregory Care.

If you would like to discuss anything mentioned in this summary please feel free to speak to Carole or Catherine either after mass or 07434 669011.

We would also like to hear from you if you have any suggestions on how we could further develop Gregory Care or better still if you would like to join our team!

Developments to look out for in 2024:

- Table top sale 15th April 2023.
- Parish Lunch - May (date to be confirmed)
- Picnic in the Park 23rd June.

**All Gregory Care activities are wholly funded by donations and fund raising.**