

Bethany Overnight Welcome Centre - End of Season Update

Jim Roarty, Chair of the Justice and Peace Group, writes: ‘As many of you will know, among other services they provide for the homeless, Bethany Christian Trust offer overnight accommodation for rough sleepers; because of Covid and the need to maintain separation, they have been using the Haymarket Hub, a hotel opposite Haymarket Station. A number of Christian groups/parishes, including our two parishes, take turns to provide a hot meal for the homeless people using the Welcome Centre which opened for the winter in October and closed on 1 May.

This winter season, our teams committed to providing the meal on 15 evenings but, because Bethany was struggling for teams in the second half of the season, we volunteered for an extra 5 evenings. We have been very blessed by the involvement of Seton Steele who works for a company called Apetito, a provider of pre-prepared meals. Apetito has donated the meals on 18 of our 20 evenings and Seton has prepared the meal on every evening he was available and then come along to the Welcome Centre to assist with the service. This has meant that we have required only two additional volunteers on each occasion to take orders and serve tables. It has also been a tremendous financial saving – a great boon to the Justice & Peace Group bank balance, particularly as the last two years have not been conducive to fund-raising.

A huge thanks to all our volunteers for the love and service they have provided to people in need. Special mention should be made of Jane Meagher and Catherine McAnenny who stepped in to do the food preparation on the occasions when Seton was not available. Jane was elected as City Councillor for the Portobello/Craigmillar ward at the recent election but still hopes to be able to maintain her Bethany involvement.

We had a new volunteer on the last evening, 1 May – Fr Jock – and the reports suggest he did OK so we will bear him in mind for next season!

For the next winter season, starting in October, Seton has said that Apetito will continue to provide the meals and that he is happy to continue preparing them when available. Again, huge thanks to Seton and his company for this wonderful generosity. This means that on most occasions, the parish volunteers will only have to turn up at the Welcome Centre at 7.30pm to make sure everything is ready for the food arriving then serve the meals till 10pm and usually, by the time the clearing-up is finished, the team will be away shortly after 10.30pm.

If anyone is interested in giving an evening or two over the winter to participate in this worthwhile – and enjoyable – work, please contact Jim Roarty (jimroarty4@gmail.com tel 07719 952 472)’