

The Outreach Story

In 1973 Fr. Puttmann told the Parish Council that a young parishioner, Sr. Anne Walton, had gone to Kenya to work as a teacher in a girl's school. He felt that her home parish should support her. A small group (Ron Chapman, Monica Walsh, Elizabeth Watson and Angela McKinney) consulted with her about how best to do this. It was decided that we should raise money for a building attached to the school where mothers could be trained in sewing and handicrafts to help support their families. It was also to be used as a Medical Centre for local families. The money raised over the next two years was just over £1,200. Over the next forty years we supported various projects wherever Sr. Anne was working in East Africa.

The Outreach Group was formed in the late 1970's. The aims were:

- (1) to support the needs of the poor in Sheffield and wherever we had personal contacts overseas; and
- (2) to educate ourselves and the wider parish about the work of our partners.

Through Charles Ryan, a parishioner who travelled extensively in South America, we supported a number of projects overseen by Father Garavito who worked in the shanty townships of Bogota. Through Fr. Gerry Burke we supported various projects in Peru where he had worked for several years. We have a long association with *Reaching the Unreached* which works with the deprived in Southern India; they look after orphans from babyhood through their education until they start a career. We have also supported the work in Amazonian Brazil of Fr. Peter Shekelton who grew up in this parish and projects in India via the late Terry Wright.

The group has supported a wide variety of projects in Africa; from sewing machines to a chicken cooperative! For many years Fred and Barbara Sadowski packed up hundreds of parcels containing sewing materials, bandages etc. which were sent to East Africa. We supported two priests in Tanzania and helped raise money to build a home for the babies and small children of women prisoners in Arusha prison in Tanzania. We raised the money to build a day-clinic for expectant mothers and small children where Sr. Christine Lawler worked as a midwife in Malawi. We support projects in Kenya through our contact with Father John Mahon, with whom Angela Wood has done volunteer work in the past. We have assisted other projects in West Africa including funding a water-pump in Sierra Leone and sending educational supplies to the Gambia.

Closer to home, Outreach has had links with projects in Europe. Frank and Hilary Donnelly made numerous journeys to Bosnia in an old van taking much needed food and medical aid. After the break-up of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc, several parishioners were active in projects in Romania, including orphanages, and the Sadowskis sent many aid parcels to Poland.

Finally, we support many partners in our local area including *St. Wilfrid's Centre*, *SVP Furniture Store*, the *Terminus Initiative* and *Grace Foodbank* in Lowedges, *Ben's Centre* for street drinkers, *The Samaritans* and *Assist Refugee Support*. During Lent and Advent we organise collections of food, toiletries and clothing for local charities which help parishioners remember those in need when preparing for Easter and Christmas.

In conclusion, through the generosity of OLST parishioners over the last forty years, Outreach has raised nearly £250,000 which has been distributed to over sixty local and overseas partners. We hope that we have also managed to increase awareness within the parish of the important work done by these partners.