

# THE PASSAGE

HELPING HOMELESS PEOPLE since 1980

FOUNDING PATRON Cardinal Basil Hume

PATRON Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor

**September 2009**



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Registered Charity  
Number 1079764

## Dear Friends

**As we come to the end of summer we see in the seasons the ongoing process of change. The past year has been one of great change both for The Passage as an organisation as well as for many of the homeless people that we serve.**

This time last year Sister Ellen announced that she was stepping down as Chief Executive to take up a leadership role within her Order. In June, Peter Macklin completed his period as chair of the board of trustees and Sister Ellen became the new chair. Peter will continue to play a vital role as vice chairman. In such a time of change, The Passage is indeed fortunate to have a sense of real continuity. I feel very fortunate, as Chief Executive, to be able to continue working with Sister Ellen and Peter in our shared vision for The Passage, working in the tradition of serving homeless people in the spirit of St Vincent Depaul.

### **Sowing the seeds of change among homeless people last winter**

As we move into autumn, we know winter is not far away. For those who have been homeless for many years winter can be a particularly hard time and as you know last winter was particularly severe – but it can also be a time of change when with our help entrenched rough sleepers can start to transform their lives so that they are not in the same position again the following summer.

**As we come to the end of this summer, I want to share with you the story of George, who The Passage helped come in from the cold during the winter. George's life has changed greatly in 2009 and the seeds of change that were sown in those first few weeks have well and truly begun to grow and blossom.**

George is in his forties and spent his childhood and teenage years in care. He never really settled after leaving care and took comfort in drinking and gradually became alcoholic and eventually street homeless. Because of previous bad experiences throughout his many years being homeless, George did not feel able to move into hostel accommodation or any form of shared housing.

Last autumn Chris, one of our street outreach workers, got to know George and he started to use the day centre to meet his basic needs. Working with Chris, George recognised the damage that alcohol had done to his life and had stopped drinking completely. As the very cold weather set in, George also started to use the day centre at night during the period when, in addition to our emergency hostel accommodation, we were also able keep the day centre open at night to give those on the streets refuge from the freezing conditions. Chris realised that despite being prepared to come into the day centre at night George would not move into a hostel; but given the changes he had already made to his lifestyle it might be possible, with the right support from The Passage, for him to move into one of our supported studio flats in our Montfort House project.

Once in Montfort House, George started to engage much more positively with the day centre staff. In fact George was one of the first clients to take part in our innovative client volunteering scheme, which combines voluntary work with accredited training as part of the journey towards employment. After George finished that scheme he was keen to continue to help The Passage. Each evening a volunteer drives our van to Marks & Spencer to collect donated food. George is happy to go with them to help to load and unload the van and put the food in the cold store. George is making great progress, but we expect him to stay in Montfort House for a while. It takes time to heal the trauma of homelessness and we will continue to support George as he progresses further on his journey out of homelessness, by continuing to address the issues that led to his homelessness, in order to then be ready to move on to his own flat. **George has come a very long way in the last twelve months.**

## Our finances

Last year Sister Ellen highlighted the pressures we would face as the credit crunch began to bite. It is, as you can imagine, a real challenge as we continue to provide our much needed services in the midst of a recession. We still remain subject to frozen statutory grants, at a time of increased demand on our services, so the voluntary donations we receive are even more vital than before. Our team of fundraising volunteers, led by our Business Director Andrew Hollingsworth, have the daunting target of needing to bring in nearly £2 million a year in voluntary income.

**We need your continued contributions to enable us to provide the resources which encourage, inspire and challenge homeless people to transform their lives. Please continue to share in our mission and help people like George, and our many other clients, to continue to move forward and make not short term but lasting changes to their lives.**

Last year, to offset the fall in donations especially from businesses, we were very fortunate to receive a substantial increase in our income from legacies, as a result of the generosity of past supporters. If you are drawing up your Will or revising it, do consider remembering The Passage to help to ensure we will be able to continue our work into the future.

## **This year's gala concert - 'a night under the stars'**

Fund raising events are a vital part of our income too and bring much needed publicity to the work of The Passage. I am grateful for the support we received at the garden party in July which raised over £17,500. Our biggest event of the year is the gala concert 'a night under the stars'. I enclose a flyer for this event to be held on **Friday 27th November in the Royal Festival Hall. I do hope you can join us on the evening and encourage other people to come to what promises to be a fantastic night.**

If we could sell all 2,500 seats and all of the advertising space in the programme then that would give a great boost to our work this year. If you are able to promote ticket sales or are interested in advertising in the programme then please contact Andrew Hollingsworth on 020 7592 1855 or by email at [andrew.h@passage.org.uk](mailto:andrew.h@passage.org.uk)

Thank you so much for all your support. The generosity of our supporters never ceases to amaze me; knowing the strong support so many people have for our work makes overcoming even the toughest challenges homeless people face suddenly seem achievable.

**Times are very tough, but with your continued support and generosity we can ensure that The Passage is there for all seasons; built on strong foundations that withstand the ravages of recession and show that people do care and that there will always be a helping hand for those in need on our streets.**

Yours faithfully,



Mick Clarke  
Chief Executive

*PS Everyone who can come is invited to our Annual Meeting of Friends and Supporters in Westminster Cathedral Hall, Ambrosden Avenue, London SW1P 1QJ at 6.45 pm on the 27th October 2009 to receive an update on our work followed by refreshments when you can meet staff, volunteers and other supporters.*

*I am also enclosing a flyer for a forthcoming Stephen Hough concert in Westminster Cathedral as the Cathedral have been kind enough to distribute our flyers to supporters of their music.*