

St Joseph's Refugee Support Group – and COVID-19

August 2020

Unfortunately, we are all still experiencing the effects of COVID-19. With the declaration of a State of Emergency we are facing the realities of long term isolation. For many of us this means trying to maintain contact with family and friends via phone calls, Chat sessions or Zoom. For others who have few contacts or resources, it means sustained isolation and loneliness. This is particularly true for asylum seekers living in the community who have not developed social networks, and who have few resources, either social or financial.

Connections through school, religious groups and neighbours have disappeared. Many have lost their jobs and most have no access to benefits, while others have no right to work even if jobs were available. Yet the costs of living must still be met, somehow. If they have managed to find a home they must still find the money to pay for rent, food, and other necessities. Their only resource is to turn to charities. These charities are stretching their income over ever-increasing needs but also facing the fact that many of their staff are self-isolating and fund raising is not bringing in enough to meet the need.

What can we do to help? We are offering as much practical help as we can. Recently (with the aid the Malvern conference of St Vincent de Paul) we were able to send shopping vouchers to a number of households. We have assisted with study costs leading to independence. We continue to contribute to the Brigidine Asylum Seeker Project, which is receiving many requests for assistance with rent and food. We continue to have telephone contact with a number of people who, like us, are feeling confined and isolated. Those with children are trying to manage home schooling.

Of course, freedom to move and to visit is still a long way off. Until then, we offer our prayers, our thoughts and our compassion, but we also need to address immediate physical needs. Money is by no means a complete answer, but it can help. We are most grateful for the ongoing support of our generous donors but to continue to offer help we still need to ask for funds.

If you can help, please donate as follows:

Cheques should be made payable to:

“St. Joseph's Catholic Church Refugee Support Group”

and sent to: St Joseph's Parish Refugee Support Group

St. Joseph's Parish, 47 Stanhope Street, Malvern 3144.

If you require a receipt, please include your name and postal address.

Funds can also be transferred online:

Bank details: St. Joseph's Parish Refugee Support Group / (CDF Account with NAB):

BSB 083 347 Acc.No. 392 506 587

Please provide your surname in the reference section. If you require a receipt, please email your name and postal address to Barry O'Reilly – barryoreilly2@bigpond.com