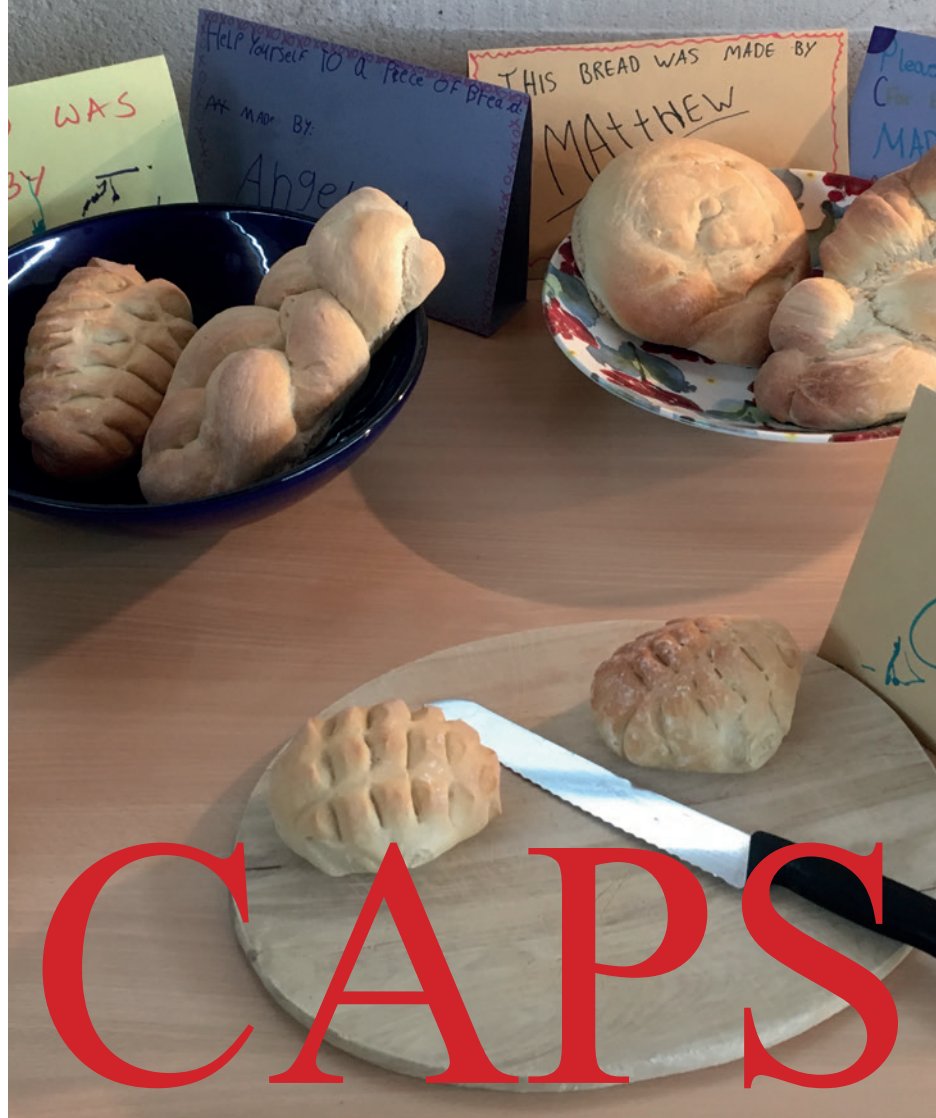


Catholics for
AIDS Prevention
& Support

2019 Newsletter
World AIDS Day
December 1st



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The views expressed in this magazine are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of CAPS.

CAPS

Catholics for AIDS Prevention & Support

CAPS

Objectives

We are a network of
Christians in Britain
and Ireland promoting
HIV prevention and
support.

We aim to be a voice in
the church for people
living with HIV/AIDS
and a catholic voice in
the world of HIV/AIDS.

To promote education and prevention, treatment,
care and relevant pastoral ministry for all those living
with and affected by HIV/AIDS, particularly but not
exclusively in the UK and Ireland.

To promote the practical, financial, emotional,
spiritual, sacramental and pastoral needs of people
living with or affected by HIV/AIDS and to develop
appropriate responses.

To promote continuing reflection on all aspects of
ethical, theological, and other challenges raised by
HIV/AIDS, not least issues of social justice, through
publication, seminars, and other relevant means.

Chairperson's message

**Communities make a difference:
practices of solidarity and love.**

The theme of this year's World AIDS Day on December 1st is 'Communities make the difference'. The volunteers and members of 'Catholics for AIDS Prevention and Support' (CAPS) try to make a difference in various ways.

First, we prioritise people living with HIV (PLWH) through our peer support groups and our 'Positive Catholics' ministry. The members of our community understand the psychological, social, physical, material and spiritual challenges of living with HIV at a deep level, through personal experience. In turn, motivated by Christian service, they offer support and encouragement to others, in practices of solidarity and love. An HIV diagnosis comes as a massive shock to most people. HIV disproportionately impacts groups who are already disadvantaged because of immigration status, poverty, poor mental health, ethnicity or sexual orientation. For someone already on the margins of society, afforded little respect, an HIV diagnosis is felt as another assault on

their dignity. HIV stigma remains so powerful, that often people keep their diagnosis secret, and thus hide a part of themselves, even from those whom they consider friends. Living with HIV often pushes a person further to the margins of society, family and church. We try to be with such people, and trust that with time, understanding and acceptance, healing and strengthening can begin in the lives of those who have been wounded, especially those who suffer multiple afflictions.

Second, CAPS makes a difference within the HIV sector. Clinics refer especially isolated patients to our groups, because they know they will be welcomed as they are. We advise the nurse who doesn't know what to say to the desperate patient, who refuses life-saving medication, because her Pastor has told her to 'trust in God'. CAPS advocates for the religious needs of PLWH within the Public Health sector. We argue for the rights of all people to access healthcare, housing, social services and decent employment. For secular agencies who recognise the importance of faith for many of their clients, but do not have the resources to meet spiritual need, we provide retreats, Christian community and spaces for renewal that can make the difference between mere survival and the human flourishing that God intends.

Third, through workshops, presentations and publications we call the church to respond to the needs of PLWH. Considering how our sisters and brothers living with HIV are excluded, challenges us all to consider more deeply, what we mean when we say that 'All are welcome' in Church. Do we really mean that? Is it enough to say it? Are there actions that we can take to make Church a more inviting and welcoming community for those who are more usually excluded?

Fourth, CAPS makes a difference whenever individuals living with HIV are empowered to become seen and heard. In the HIV sector and society our members witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ for all people, including those living with HIV. When our members share their stories with Christians they make themselves vulnerable before their own faith community. Whether publicly or more intimately, through this vulnerable sharing of themselves, the issues raised by the fact of HIV are 'brought into Church'. The questions of sex and relationships and mortality; questions of the limits of God's mercy and love; questions about prejudices and exclusionary practices within the Church; all these issues and more, that we might ordinarily avoid, are set before us, embodied in a person with

courage. As adult disciples of Jesus, Positive Catholics enact a pedagogy of vulnerable encounter, as gift and witness for the whole Body of Christ. Prejudice, ignorance, fear and judgement are overcome through meaningful personal encounter. Which Christian can say that they have not been transformed by an encounter with the Christ whom they have met in others, often in the most surprising of ways?

There is no community more called to make a difference in the lives of others than the Church. In these pages you will read of some of the ways in which CAPS makes a difference. Thank you for your support, and for the ways in which you make a difference in your daily life for others. If you have not already done so, please download CAPS 'All are Welcome' poster from caps-uk.org/resources or cut it out from the back of *CAPS News* for display in your church, school, or college. Making a difference may start simply, with a sign of welcome.



John Thornhill

Nicola and the Resurrection – encountering AIDS in Medjugorje

This year CAPS Trustee John Thornhill visited the Catholic pilgrimage site of Medjugorje in Bosnia Herzegovina. At the nearby ‘Cenacolo Community’ he learned about Nicola: a young Italian man who died from an AIDS related illness in 1996. The community regard him as one of their “saints”.

The Cenacolo Community was founded in 1983 by Mother Elvira Petrozzi, and provides a house of welcome for young people struggling with addiction, alcohol or substance misuse. In Community, hope is restored and lives rebuilt. There are now 50 Communities worldwide.

The Cenacolo Community chapel in Medjugorje is home to a huge icon called ‘Christ’s descent into Hell’. It re-presents a common iconographic theme from the Orthodox tradition: the Resurrected Lord descends into Hell. Christ’s robe, flowing upwards, symbolises His dramatic, enthusiastic,

urgent descent to ‘Hades’ to bring new life to those who have died. The gates of Hell have been broken and torn apart. The power of the devil and death have been destroyed through the life-giving Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus.

We see Jesus reaching out to two figures, Adam and Eve, ‘tugging’ them out of the grave. This symbolises that the life-giving Grace of Christ, is given to all humankind, even back to the beginnings of humanity.

To the left are David and Solomon, ancestors of the earthly Jesus, and closest to Him, Elijah, who is also seen as a prototype of John the Baptist. Three figures to the right represent the ‘just ones’ who served God in the time before Christ: traditionally these may be three prophets, or the young men who witnessed to God in the midst of the fire, in Daniel 3. Conventionally three figures are usually depicted here. The Cenacolo icon shows four figures: *why?*

This icon was painted by three young men from the Community, without prior artistic training. Their work was a labour of duty, devotion and love. This was a ‘shared hard task’, (to coin a phrase from the Iona Community)



for each of them, through which, bonds of solidarity, in community, through service, are formed and strengthened.

The process of creating the icon from their very little artistic talent and training mirrored their struggle to rise up from the shackles of addiction which had denied them so much life, friendship and community. From the little they had when they entered the community, they embarked on creating a huge and inspiring work of art: a celebration of the Resurrection which

Above: Cenacolo Community Medjugorje icon ‘Christ’s descent into Hell’ by medjugorje.ws

became a symbol of their own resurrection.

I met Paul, a 26 yr old American who had struggled with addictions from the age of 14. He pointed out that Adam and Eve are crouched and old, an image that the men of the Community identify strongly with, because, “drugs made us feel old. Drugs robbed us of

our lives”. But Christ reaches into that place of despair and pulls them free into His light.

Paul solved the mystery of the additional fourth figure on the right, the clean-shaven young man, closest to Jesus. “This figure is Nicola, the young man loved by the Cenacolo Community who died of an AIDS related illness”. Nicola’s life and death in the Community had been such a witness of patience, service, and love, that his fellow brothers considered him one of the ‘just ones’, a prophet or a saint; and they wanted him remembered in the icon. They wanted *him* to watch over the Community also. And they wanted to *share* in the hope and the joy of *his* resurrection with Christ.

I found Paul’s testimony deeply moving. Discovering one of the ‘just-ones’ who had lived with HIV and died with AIDS at the heart of Medjugorje is an inexpressibly powerful sign of hope for me. Nicola is remembered without judgement or stigma. He is remembered by the Community not because of his struggle with addiction or his HIV status: *he is remembered because his life and death witnessed to a renewal of his relationship with God lived with profound intensity.*



This call to new life is a call to us all whatever our HIV status. The hope of the Resurrection is a hope for all of us!

During his last months, a nurse tried to cheer Nicola up: “*I told him that he was extraordinary...he avoided my words: too sugary for his taste. He answered me kindly and dryly and said ‘you should have seen me before!’ I was really interested in Nicola’s personality and life....the mistakes of his past and the trial of his illness had led him to a deep faith...His courage seemed to say ‘Life is a gift from God, and that’s all there is to it!’*” (Community Cenacolo 1999. Beyond AIDS).



Sample Bidding Prayers for World AIDS Day (Sunday 1st December)

Prayer resources

Sunday December 1st marks the 32nd annual World AIDS Day. Let us remember all those living with HIV and AIDS. We pray for all those infected or affected by HIV all over the world. We pray for the doctors, nurses, scientists and carers who work for healing in this devastating pandemic. We ask God to bless the work of CAFOD and Caritas International, who serve the poor in the name of the Church. We pray for all those involved in the ‘Positive Catholics’ HIV ministry here in the UK. May God fill all of us with compassion and solidarity.

As we mark World AIDS Day on December 1st, let us pray for all people infected and affected by HIV and AIDS throughout the world. Let us pray that God’s justice and mercy will extend to all who suffer in this pandemic. Let us pray for doctors and nurses, and for all Christians who put God’s love into action. We remember too, the ministry of Catholics for AIDS Prevention and Support, here in the UK, praying especially for the members of the Positive Catholics HIV peer support communities in Britain.

Adela Senkubuge

Empowering Women: Equality Matters.

CAPS trustee Adela Senkubuge (formerly Mugabo) in collaboration with 'Reinventing Success', facilitated a residential drama workshop for women, at Mellor Country House, Stockport in October. Here she reports on what the project intends to achieve and why it is needed. Trustees are grateful to ViiV Healthcare Positive Action Community Grants who funded this important work.

Manchester based 'Reinventing Success' and Catholics for AIDS Prevention and Support (CAPS) delivered a leadership skills and drama workshop 'Act for Equality' for women living with HIV. The project aims to enhance the women's leadership skills enabling them to challenge HIV stigma and reduce discrimination in health and other public services settings. From the women's work an online resource will be launched around International Women's day 2020 in Manchester. It is hoped that this can be used as a training resource to educate and inform health care professionals. We hope to find ways to integrate the film as part

of professional training for nurses, doctors and social workers.

HIV-related stigma and discrimination prevent many people from accessing the services they need. Consequently, their ability to live a good quality of life is diminished. Increasingly, there is a growing awareness that 'HIV (medical) treatment' is just one, albeit essential point, on a 'continuum of care and support' for those diagnosed with HIV. Living well with HIV means more than simply viral suppression. HIV related stigma is linked with poorer mental health outcomes, including emotional distress, and reduced self-esteem and is one of the strongest hindrances to effectively responding to HIV. When healthcare providers lack understanding of the realities of living with HIV, or where stigmatising attitudes towards PLWH are evident, both access to and the quality of a range of health and social services provision are negatively impacted. Women (and other PLWH) report a lack of confidence in healthcare staff, outside specialist HIV clinics, and this leads to worry about the treatment and care they will receive now and in their later life. For some people this also means, in turn, that

Right: CAPS Trustee, Adela Senkubuge



their HIV can remain untreated.

The drama workshop was attended by 15 women from different backgrounds, including Africans, British and Portuguese women. They were born in Papua Guinea, Angola, Kenya, Rwanda, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Jamaica and Britain, all women now living in Manchester, London and Newcastle.

Below is what women who attended the Workshop said.

British lady from Manchester: *“I found the drama workshop very interesting and useful sharing our stories through dram was a real eye opener. I have been able to make lots of new friends”*

Lady born in Papua Guinea: *“I am very happy, thank you CAPS and Reinventing Success for giving me an opportunity to attend this workshop. I am not ashamed of my HIV status any more, I am not alone, and I have sisters I have met today”*

Lady from Angola: *“Acting our experiences was very interesting and watching others show what has happened to them while accessing medical health services, shows I am*

not alone in experiencing stigma. It has also helped me to understand other cultures and how they are affected by HIV stigma”

Lady from Malawi: *“three things I will take away from this workshop – I am not alone, Sisterhood and friendship, confidence to challenge inappropriate questions and bad practice”*

Lady from London: *“ We can influence how we want to be treated by health and social care professionals if we are given skills and confidence to do it, I am ready to challenge HIV stigma in any form”*

All the women expressed a wish to be more involved in decisions about their health care, and asked that HIV Commissioners and other decision makers redouble their commitment to meaningfully involve women living with HIV in the planning and delivery of services.

CAPS and Reinventing Success hope this project and the eventual online resource will help the understanding of health and social care professionals when dealing with people living with HIV and that women will be able to access health services without fear of discrimination.

John Thornhill

If Memory Serves: how do we publicly remember HIV/AIDS?

As the fortieth anniversary of AIDS approaches, a new play about the legacy of HIV has enjoyed successive runs at the Young Vic and the Noel Coward theatres to rapturous acclaim. This Autumn it hits Broadway. The author of “The Inheritance” is a young gay Puerto-Rican New Yorker called Matthew Lopez. It is staged in two parts and it is self-consciously inspired by the 1992 Merchant Ivory Film of

the novel “Howards End” by E. M. Forster.

“*The Inheritance*” centres on a young gay couple, Eric and Toby living in New York. Like the Schlegel sisters from “*Howards End*”, they are facing eviction. Eric grows closer to an elderly gay man called Walter who gradually shares his memories about living through the 1980s AIDS crisis, caring for his friends as they died, one by one, at his house in the country. Walter is dying and unbeknownst to Eric, Walter leaves the house and its memories to Eric. However, Walter’s partner Henry, has other ideas: Eric is disinherited; and so begins a tale of



the invincible power of memory; and the inexorable need to right wrongs and secure a just inheritance.

“The Inheritance” is fundamentally about inter-generational memory and how this is shared in the tangled lives and inter-connected loves of three generations of gay men. Set against the backdrop of America in transition: from the “audacity of Hope” of the Obama years to the nihilism, cynicism and despair of Trump’s election, the crisis of the 2016 Presidential Election sets the characters soul searching about the meaning of their past and the possibilities for their future. “If we can’t have a conversation about our past, then what will be our future?” one character asks. “Who are we? And who will we become?” *“The Inheritance”* invites us to consider the meaning of *memory*: How do we remember the past?

Novelist Douglas Coupland in *“Generation X: Tales for an accelerated culture”* once acerbically described two tendencies of the modern age: *“historical underdosing* - to live in a period of time when nothing seems to happen. Major symptoms include addiction to newspapers, magazines, and TV news broadcasts” and *“historical overdosing* - to live in a period of time when too much seems

to happen. Major symptoms include addiction to newspapers, magazines, and TV news broadcasts.” His comments are apt for how we evaluate “remembering”. How can we understand our future without actively reflecting on our past? But how can we live our future without being burdened by the traumas of our past? And on top of this, how do we remember appropriately, respectfully, constructively, without pointlessly rehearsing meaningless memorial forms or rituals.

So how do we publicly remember HIV/AIDS? This is a difficult and deeply sensitive question because HIV/AIDS is still very much with us. It is present and future, not only past. But in a particular way the global pandemic of the 80s and 90s has left an indelible mark on our cultural memory. American scholar Andreas Huyssen referred to the contemporary age as witnessing “an explosion of memory discourses”: a trend to remember the traumas of our collective past in the public realm: from memorials to slavery, the Holocaust or AIDS: a succession of demands that the world come to grips with its too numerous crimes against

Right & previous page: Soller and Samuel H Levine in The Inheritance. Photo: Tristram Kenton/The Guardian

humanity. James Young notes, however, that the problem with memory discourses is that in themselves they are “inert and amnesiac”: that is, they are completely dependent on visitors, or audiences or readers for whatever memory they finally produce. Visiting the ‘Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe’ in Berlin, I was horrified to see crowds of smiling tourists taking selfies in front of the massive concrete blocks which stand as sobering testimony to the brutality of the Holocaust. Is this an act of “remembering”?

By contrast, in 1997 I was privileged to be a member of a team from Union

Theological Seminary in New York participating in one of the last public displays of the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt. This project began in 1987 and served as a travelling, hand-stitched roll-call for those lost to AIDS. Each large individual panel making up the whole Quilt, was designed and sewn by friends, family, and lovers, celebrating the uniqueness and beauty of a life lost to AIDS. The ‘unfolding’ of the NAMES AIDS Memorial Quilt was a respectful, reverent, coordinated ‘ritual’: dressed in white hundreds of teams ritually unfolded sections of the 48,000 panels along the National Mall in Washington DC. Unfolding each panel recalled a named individual. A



lost member of my community whom I did not know, but who nevertheless shared a journey with me. This was an act of community and 'kinship'. This did indeed feel like 're-membering'.

Judaism and Christianity are fundamentally religions of 'remembrance'. In Judaism, active memory is critical to understanding the significant encounters in history between humankind and God. The Exodus from slavery is vivified and re-enacted in every celebration of the Passover. The Passover Seder involves two elements. It's based on the principle laid down by the Haggadah: "*In every generation we must tell the story as if it happened to us.*" Sitting around the Seder table, Jewish people say "We were slaves and now God has drawn us close to serve Him." The Jewish philosopher and Torah scholar Maimonides argued the need to move from *words to action*: Which is why Jewish people eat the bitter herbs, symbolic of bitterness; and drink wine while reclining, symbolic of freedom. This is ritual solidarity: 'a being-present-with' those who have gone before us, but whose journey we share.

As Christians our memory of the past is inextricably linked to our faith in the goodness of Creation, the

Redemption of Creation by Jesus; and ultimately and crucially our hope in the Resurrection. St. Augustine believed that 'memory' was critical for the way in which we understand time itself. Time cannot be understood as past, present, and future, but as continuous present. Gabriel Ricci¹ argues that for Augustine: "The past and future are tethered to a present without duration." This "eternalizing" of the present collapses "the three moments of time" into a single movement "of re-collected memory." Our individual creation is always an image of the creative goodness of God, our redemption is always personal: Jesus lived and died for me - and for everyone I have ever loved and ever will love; and all of creation will be transformed by the power of the Resurrection. Memory itself is a foundational feature of Christianity not because it is "inert and amnesiac" but because it is alive, personal, communal and ever-present. Jesus' words "*do this in memory of me*" makes always present his saving Passion and Resurrection.

¹Gabriel R. Ricci, *Time Consciousness: The Philosophical Uses of History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2002), 70.

Martin Pendergast

Shifting Sands or Turning Tides?

Developments in Catholic LGBT+ ministry in historical perspective

It was the 29th December 1975 when the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) published its Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics, the first time that the Vatican had dealt in any extended way with sexual orientation issues. Although St. Pope Paul VI had approved the document for publication, it is important to note that it carries no weight of anything like infallible Catholic teaching. Nevertheless it created a stir, applying for the first time the language of "intrinsic disorder" to same-sex physical relationships.

In the face of growing challenges to the Declaration's negativity by Catholic moral theologians internationally, and some Bishops, including the Catholic Bishops Conference of England & Wales, the CDF, in October 1986, issued a Letter to Bishops of the Catholic Church, On the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons, describing homosexuality thus: "Although the particular inclination of the homosexual person is not a sin, it is more or less a strong tendency ordered toward an

intrinsic moral evil; and thus the inclination itself must be seen as an objective disorder."

In the mid 80's some Catholics in England & Wales sought to respond to the growing epidemic of unusual illnesses emerging among gay men. Catholic AIDS Link (CAL), CAPS' predecessor organisation, developed a roadshow of workshops to educate and raise awareness of what came to be known as HIV & AIDS. Encouraged in those early days by the late Cardinal Hume, who had said that in the absence of a cure "Education is vital in the prevention of HIV" our workshops included not only HIV awareness, but also promoted the Church in England & Wales' pastoral care approach to lesbian and gay people. This was published in 1979 by the Bishops' Social Welfare Committee as *An Introduction to the Pastoral Care of Homosexual People*, requested by the National Conference of Priests, to both explain and counter some of the CDF's negative assumptions. This document was later added to by Cardinal Hume's even more sensitive "A Note on the Teaching of the Church Concerning Homosexuality".

These were sensitive areas in which to wade, but crucial at that time because the Vatican teaching on sexuality, issued at the pinnacle of the AIDS crisis in British society, had impacted so disastrously upon Catholics struggling



to integrate their faith and their sexual orientation. The self-image of many Catholic gay men had been severely wounded, not only by what was perceived as violent Vatican language but by subsequent, so-called “pastoral care” which excluded people from the Sacraments and from Catholic communities. Such approaches also negatively affected parents and families as they resolved to embrace their daughters and sons, despite often condemnatory tones of the institutional Church.

As the HIV pandemic expanded, increasingly, ‘straight’ people were affected and infected; not least women and children. Many came here as

refugees and asylum-seekers from Africa. Consequently, there were tendencies to “de-gay” Church responses. CAL itself experienced some of these tensions but with CAPS’ later development, gay men and African women and men strengthened their common commitment to work together without exclusion: not as victims, but as brothers and sisters in Christ; agents of their own dignity, freedom, and well-being.

I offer this historical background as the important context for the important

Above: LGBT+ Catholics 2019 pilgrimage to Rome, with Pope Francis

pastoral strides that the Roman Catholic Church is now developing under Pope Francis leadership, particularly in welcoming lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and others (LGBT+) within the People of God. Who would have thought that an LGBT+ pilgrimage to Rome in 2019 could include a personal encounter with Pope Francis and attendance at his Ash Wednesday Mass? This was the first time that he had welcomed an LGBT+ group even though he has received individual LGBT+ people. He has also held extensive telephone conversations with LGBT+ people who have contacted him.

Pope Francis has emphasised in so many of his letters to the Church that pastoral ministry and accompaniment begins with engaging with the reality of peoples’ lives. His response to the 2014 & 2015 Synods on Marriage & Family, even if not in any way lengthily explicit about LGBT+ ministry, affirms again and again that pastoral care is not about applying abstract ideals from on high, but walking with people in their particularities. This walking-with is key for the renewal and reform of the Church so that it becomes a Synodal Church - an ecclesial reality where people and pastors at all levels listen to each other, reflect together, and discern what God is calling us to be. Nowhere has this been more apparent than in the recent Amazon Synod.

As local Churches and their bishops begin to embrace this vision of Church so the growing recognition and inclusion of LGBT+ people in local dioceses and parishes increases. The LGBT+ Catholics Westminster pastoral outreach has occupied a unique position globally with its formal recognition by the last two Cardinal Archbishops of Westminster. There is no one-size-fits-all when it comes to LGBT+ ministries and various Catholic Dioceses in England & Wales have explored different ways to respond. Clifton & Middlesbrough Dioceses have monthly Masses welcoming LGBT+ Catholics, parents and families. Nottingham Diocese holds occasional Masses and there are discussions at various levels in other dioceses such as Hexham & Newcastle, Portsmouth, and Southwark.

Most, if not all of these initiatives have come about through grassroots rather than ‘top-down’ approaches. Yes, it has taken 40+ years for such welcomes to be offered, but they offer examples of how strategies relating to other pastoral concerns, not least those communities affected by HIV can be integrated into the Church’s life and mission.

Sands have been shifting slowly and tides of hostility have been transformed. This should not surprise us because one of the best-kept secrets of the Roman Catholic Church is its teaching on the

development of doctrine. There are those who shout loud for Pope Francis to change the Church's teaching on gender and sexuality. In so doing, they misunderstand how formal Church teachings emerge: teachings develop out of reflection on the reality of people's lives, in the light of the Church's best principles on the dignity of the human being and the inalienable rights of conscience, and the consistency of right practice with proper understandings of Scripture and Tradition. We are standing on a beach where waves are uncovering the riches which the ocean of authentic, liberating human reality reveals. The grains of the seashore are providing us with the places from which we can see that all has been created by God and it is good.

Heather Sangster Smith

We need to keep talking, especially in churches.

CAPS 'Positive Faith' online resources are reaching audiences around the world. Here one woman living with HIV, resident in New Zealand, reviews the series of short films

It is heartening to find the Positive Faith resource and short films addressing HIV from a Christian worldview.

The videos have been created and delivered with clarity, sincerity and sensitivity. The presentations, both scripted and those of personal story, come across as 'positive' i.e. affirming, encouraging, caring and reassuring. Personal stories are very real and give us confidence in sharing our own narratives.

The videos are very inclusive, the message is, 'HIV is an equal opportunities illness!' i.e. HIV doesn't discriminate. Problematic subjects, such as our differing sexualities and risky behaviours, are treated in a non-judgmental and loving way. Living with HIV is a transformative process and we are compelled to review our lives as a consequence. These videos are a great opportunity to challenge some myths and time held beliefs, that still exist in churches.

The videos contain clear messages about the need to consult with medical professionals and the necessity of taking medication. God is the God of both faith and reason, science and wholeness. God shares our burden and suffering. You are not alone. God

strengthens us to live positively with HIV.

Scripture is used wisely in these videos. It is carefully chosen and presented without comment i.e. there is no preaching attached.

The message I found encouraging is to be in control and take ownership of our own story and the conversations we engage in. Disclosure brings you out of the shadows. Telling your story lifts the burden of secrecy. Silence and isolation are damaging. We need to keep talking, especially in churches.

The spirituality that underpins this series one of hope. It reiterates that God is with us and loves us unconditionally. God experienced human suffering through person of Jesus, who suffered pain, affliction, isolation, humiliation and shame. God understands and accompanies us in our pain and shame and isolation. Jesus is present in all these places. The spirituality of the Cross in this series focuses on suffering and healing, not on sin and atonement. God does not punish us by sending HIV. Nothing can separate us from the love of God. As with Jesus, we are brought to newness of life.

One participant notes that at the

beginning she felt isolated and invisible, especially in Church. In the early months after diagnosis, that is the way I would feel. 'What if people knew?'. 'How would that change my relationships?' I self-isolated, I felt different and 'other'. However, this wore off as I accepted the presence of HIV as friend and a gift. Disclosing to the right people brought down the stress of silence. I have learnt to live with joy and gratitude.

Although I did not feel unclean or ashamed, I feared the response of family and Christian friends. At first it was a private journey, but knowing God was with me. The videos emphasise the importance of peer support and a healthy inclusive church. To my surprise, as I began sharing my HIV story with Christians I was embraced and loved.

The message in the videos is that we are more than HIV. At first, HIV will figure large in our lives but as time goes on, we grow and life balance begins to restore. We are loved.

Why not visit Positive Faith and consider how you might use the resource to begin a conversation in your church group, college or school at positivefaith.net

Positive Faith

Positive Faith provides video resources addressing HIV and Christian Faith. There are three distinct series to encourage any PLWH and support Christians to make a positive difference.

1. **Living with HIV** - pastoral videos directly addressed to people living with HIV
2. **HIV and faith matters** - videos for understanding and awareness
3. **Church, community and HIV** - videos that promote ideas for welcome and inclusion

Positive Faith has received coverage internationally. We recommend these articles available online:

- *How a new Catholic resource is serving those living with H.I.V./ AIDS in Britain* by D. Stewart SJ (in *America: The Jesuit Review*)
tiny.cc/america-magazine
- *HIV & the Body of Christ* by V. Manning (in *Thinking Faith*)
thinkingfaith.org/articles/hiv-and-body-christ
- *Films open up the lives of Christians affected by HIV* by Hattie Williams (in *The Church Times*)
tiny.cc/church-times
- *The Body of Christ still has HIV. It's time to talk* by Jim McManus (in *The Pastoral Review*)
tiny.cc/pastoral-review

For resources, please visit www.positivefaith.net
Positive Faith is an open access internet resource developed by CAPS.

Vincent Manning

CAPS is recruiting

CAPS is the only national Christian charity serving the pastoral, spiritual and practical needs of PLWH living in the UK.

Not all of the 103k PLWH in the UK are 'poor or vulnerable' but many are – not all identify as Christian but a majority do – everyone diagnosed with HIV deserves sensitive pastoral, spiritual and practical support to live well with what remains a highly stigmatised condition.

- 70% of all PLWH identify as religious or spiritual, of whom 49% say religion is fairly or very important to them. 52% of PLWH in the UK are Christian
- 33% of all PLWH live below the poverty threshold
- A majority are disadvantaged by immigration status or sexual orientation
- 50% experience mental health problems, twice the rate of general public

CAPS ministry must continue if we are to

“go first...(to) the poor and the sick, those who are usually despised and overlooked... whom society discards.”

- Pope Francis

CAPS Strategy for Sustainable Ministry will develop our educational and pastoral ministry over 3 years.

Phase 1 begins in 2020 with the recruitment of a Ministry Team Leader and a Pastoral Support Worker.





YOU'RE NOT LOST
YOU'RE HERE

CAPS is recruiting...

Recruitment

MINISTRY TEAM LEADER

We seek an exceptional person to lead the charity. You will have responsibility for all aspects of CAPS work. You will relish the challenge of taking CAPS to the next stage of development. You will recruit a professional team to work alongside our dynamic volunteers. You have experience of motivating and leading others. You are passionate about social justice; in sympathy with Christian faith; and understand how a 'preferential option for the poor' is applied in this community work setting. You will represent CAPS with bishops and HIV commissioners and enjoy the company of those we serve. Full time 35hrs post flexible working conditions. Supported by trustees and part time admin worker.



PASTORAL SUPPORT WORKER

Experienced in case work with vulnerable persons and leading support groups. You will understand Christian pastoral ministry and ideally have experience in leading retreats or similar. Your role fuses traditional case work & group work with that of a Chaplain. Part time post flexible working conditions.

Is this for you or someone you know?

We strongly encourage interested persons to contact us.

Send contact details to Vincent Manning via info@caps-uk.org with 'JOB APPLICATION' in subject line. Initial inquiries welcome. Exact terms & conditions flexible & negotiable. Closing date for Team Leader Jan. 22nd Application pack available now. Interviews 5, 6 or 7 Feb. 2020.

Both roles London based & require travel nationally. CAPS will recruit a part time Education and Training Worker in 2021 to complete the team. Open to any person regardless of HIV status.

A snapshot of the people using CAPS peer support services

1. Diversity

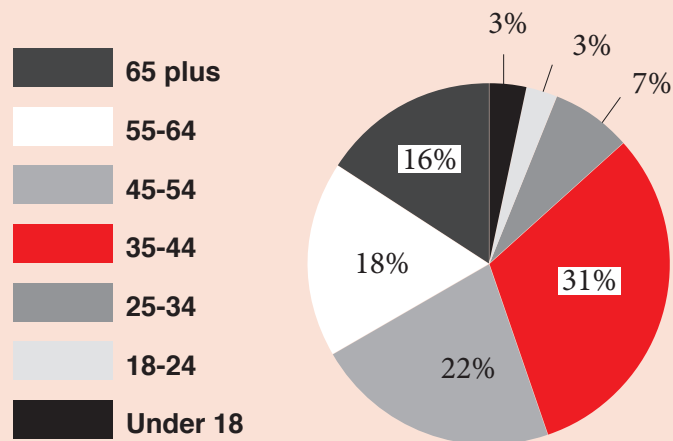
CAPS support a wide range of people living with HIV through 1-2-1 work, peer support group meetings or retreats.

The following tables display information about 147 people supported by CAPS in London and Manchester over the last 12 months (April 2018 to March 2019). The tables are accompanied by national UK statistics about People Living with HIV (PLWH) demonstrating how CAPS members reflect general trends.

A third of PLWH accessing care and treatment in the UK today are over 50, and that figure is estimated to rise to over half of all PLWH by 2028.

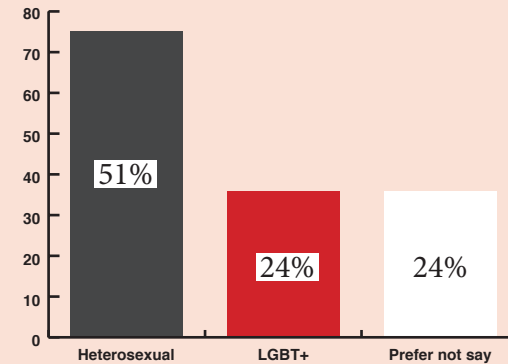
A third of older PLWH are socially isolated and 82% experienced moderate to high levels of loneliness (Terence Higgins Trust, 2017).

Age of beneficiaries

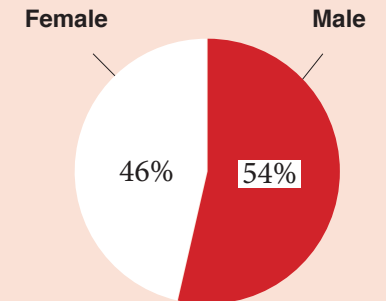


HIV affects people from all backgrounds – gender, sexuality and ethnicity. CAPS members are very diverse.

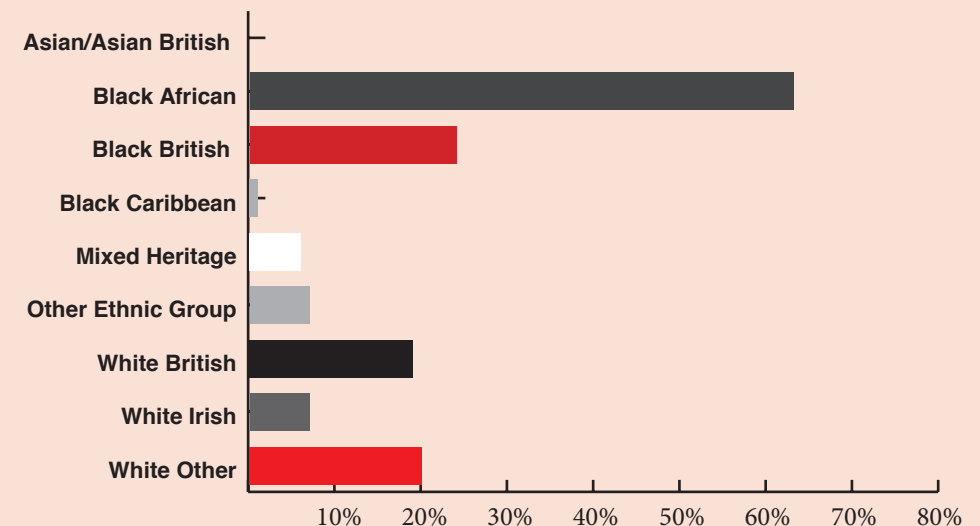
Sexuality



Gender



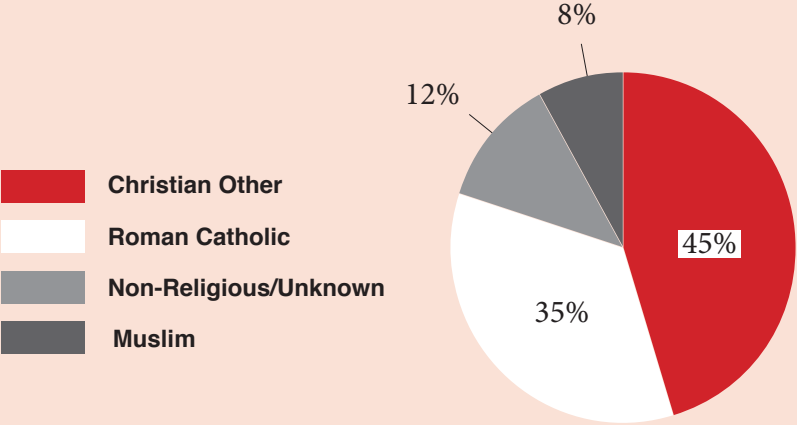
Ethnicity



2. Spiritual and pastoral needs

70% of all PLWH in the UK say they are religious or spiritual, of whom 49% say that their religion is fairly or very important to them. Of all people living with HIV 52% identify as Christian. (National Aids Trust 2018) .

Religious affiliation



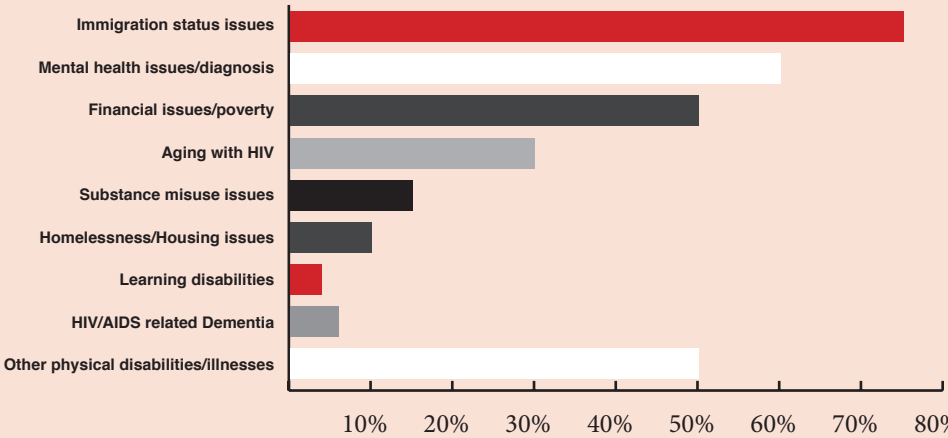
Our work with people living with or affected by HIV is focused on those that present with multiple and complex needs. In 2017 Public Health England stated “a third of all PLWH are living below the poverty threshold” and a survey by National Aids Trust (NAT) 2017, stated 72% of people living with HIV had at least one other diagnosed long-term condition. The following year, NAT 2018, reported half of PLWH experience mental health problems, which is twice the rate of the general public.

CAPS is working with some of the most vulnerable people in society who may have little recourse to other forms of support. Complex needs include:

- Immigration Status**
75% of CAPS members have immigration status issues
- Mental Health**
60% of CAPS members have mental health issues or diagnosis
- Poverty**
Approximately 50% of CAPS members are living with severe financial issues or in poverty.
- Ageing**
30% of PLWH who access CAPS peer support are over 55 years old, reflecting national trends. The ageing process is accelerated for older PLWH. Fragile social networks means that older PLWH are often denied the support of family and friends that others can expect.

Other examples are detailed in the following table:

Complex needs



News Items

A tribute to Fr. John Sherrington CP and thanks to Fr. John Kearns CP

In 2016 the Passionists religious order established partnerships with groups with whom the Congregation shares common aims and goals. 'Positive Catholics' (and CAPS charity) became a Passionist Partner because of our active commitment to women and men on the margins; and because of a long-standing relationship between CAPS and Fr. John Sherrington CP, a CAPS Trustee and more importantly our Positive Catholics ministry Chaplain. To mark the occasion of John's 40th anniversary of ordination CAPS Chair said of his ministry alongside us:

"John Sherrington's support for Positive Catholics has been a blessing to us. We have seen how healing is experienced and people are strengthened through a deeper understanding of God's solidarity with us. The interpretation of painful experience through the lens of the Cross and Passion has the potential to respond to suffering in its depths. However, John Sherrington has helped us to grow in our understanding that God has no hands but ours. We meet Christ in and through each other. I thank God for John's gifts of attentive

listening; the carefully chosen word; and his healing touch."

Unfortunately, due to ill health, John Sherrington CP was unable to accompany our retreatants at the annual Positive Catholics Douai Retreat. CAPS is grateful that Fr. John Kearns CP joined us, in continuation of this Passionist commitment to people living with HIV. John Kearns' presence at the Positive Catholics retreat recognises that in the UK HIV is still very much here; and continues to challenge every Christian Community to respond in pastorally sensitive ways.

Fr. John Kearns' presence at the Positive Catholics weekend was a powerful sign of welcome and solidarity from the Passionist Congregation with women and men from all over the world who are living in different ways with HIV. Like Fr. Sherrington, Fr. John Kearns joined the Passionists because he "saw in them the values of warmth, openness, service and a deep commitment to 'the crucified ones'". Fr. John Kearns said of his experience with Positive Catholics at the Douai retreat "The retreat touched my heart with tenderness. It was a joy to be there. Thank you for giving me this opportunity". The Positive Catholics community looks forward to welcoming Fr. John Kearns again, to share in our Christian journey



together as sisters and brothers in Christ.

Our members regularly pray for John Sherrington CP in group meetings: that he will receive all the strength and healing that he needs, and that he will be free from all anxiety. And, we thank God for his friendship and his witness to the meaning of Christ's Passion amongst us, and for us.



Top: Douai Retreatants 2019, Right: Fr. John Sherrington CP and CAPS Chair Vincent Manning 2007.

Providing services to partner agencies

by **Annie Pollock**
Advice & Support Worker

CAPS collaborates with colleagues in secular HIV agencies across the country to provide faith-sensitive support for PLWH that would otherwise not be available. Here, Annie from 'The Brigstowe Project' in Bristol writes in appreciation of opportunities provided for her clients that compliment and enhance the services that Brigstowe provides.

In the last two years four of our clients have been able to attend the Retreat week-end held in August at Douai Abbey. Their feedback has been overwhelmingly positive and they have felt welcomed and appreciative of this opportunity. As people of faith it has been very important that this is one place they have been able to be open about living with HIV. The benefit of being with others of faith who are positive without feeling judged or ashamed cannot be underestimated.

As a worker, the Retreat has been key in enabling those individuals to be open in a Faith Community, which is integral to their lives. Many have expressed their internal guilt of living with HIV and have had experience of stigma and discrimination in places (of faith) that they had hoped

would offer them safety, love and acceptance. The Retreat has allowed them to strengthen their faith and relationship with God and to enjoy the support of fellow Christians also living with HIV.

I have observed an increase in confidence and self-belief in those clients that have attended and an increased sense of self-acceptance about their HIV. The generous bursaries provided by CAPS and the travel expenses provided by St. Nicholas of Tolentino Church here in Bristol has allowed these clients to have a break from their everyday lives in an environment that would not normally be available to them.

CAPS Chair awarded Doctorate following theological research into HIV

CAPS Chair, Vincent Manning was awarded a PhD this year. His research into the theological meaning of HIV in the Church was supervised through St. Marys University, Twickenham. His final thesis includes interviews with 8 theologians and practitioners who have written about or had experience of HIV: Timothy Radcliffe, James Alison, Julie Clague, Ije Ajibade, Christina Beardsley, David McLoughlin and the last recorded interviews with the late Kevin Kelly and Sebastian Moore. In Part I of the

thesis Vincent has also considered how the church has responded to HIV in our midst historically. Drawing from the experience related in a further 10 Interviews with Christians living with HIV in England, at the heart of the thesis in Part II, Vincent argues that an HIV diagnosis may be considered as a privileged encounter with Christ in His Passion.

Manning, V., 2019. *Encountering Christ through the Passion of HIV: An inquiry into the theological meaning of HIV in the Church* is available from St. Marys University Open Research at: tiny.cc/vincentmanning

Peer Support Ministry & Thanks

Again this year CAPS provided 70 peer support group sessions across the country via Positive Catholics and the South West London Fellowship groups in London and Positive Catholics Manchester, and two retreat weekends held at Douai Abbey and Minsteracres retreat centres.

A Big Thank you!

Trustees wish to express gratitude for the hospitality given by The Benedictine Community, Douai and The Passionist Community, Minsteracres, and the Faithful Companions of Jesus Sisters and

staff at Katherine House, Salford. Thank you to all those who have volunteered to support our ministry this year. Whether by preparing our accounts, shopping for food, leading a group, being a prayer supporter or advising trustees, yours is truly a patient service of love for which we thank God.





Tim O'Keefe & Vincent Manning

In Memoriam

Priest who protested at the first Vatican Conference on AIDS dies aged 73



Fr. John 'Jack' White

21st January 1946 – 8th April 2019

John 'Jack' White was born and raised in Ireland, and after school completed training as a Nurse. Feeling called to priesthood, he joined St. Patrick's Missionary Society aka the 'Kiltegan

Fathers'. He was ordained in June 1977 and appointed to Kenya that year. His life changed forever in April 1986. On mission in Kenya, he became unwell. He drove to Nairobi and was hospitalized, and told that he had AIDS. This news equated to a 'death sentence' and so he put affairs in the parish in order and returned to Ireland to die. He got that wrong!

His HIV status shaped his life's work over the next 20 years in London and Ireland. He worked as a chaplain & counsellor accompanying people at The London Lighthouse and elsewhere, often young adults, as they came to terms with stigma & illness and impending death. He spent hours, night & day, at the bedside of people dying and helped them and their partners,

parents and family to somehow muddle through and cope with what was happening.

He was both impatient with and outraged by the prejudice, judgementalism & indifference shown by both society and his church towards him and others with HIV. He channelled this into a public activism which accompanied his more private, pastoral faith-based ministry. He saw it as his Christian responsibility to challenge prejudice & ignorance.

His activism attracted international attention following a 'protest' he made at the first Vatican Conference on HIV and AIDS in 1989. Jack had been sent as one of three delegates by Catholic AIDS Link (CAL), the predecessor charity to CAPS. CAL and Catholic AIDS ministries in the United States had written to the Vatican to request that the Conference be addressed by people with an HIV diagnosis, but to no avail. The line-up of speakers included prominent clergymen, academics and scientists, but no space was allowed for the concerns of people living with HIV or Aids to be expressed. Too many theologians and clergy who addressed the Conference spoke about people living with HIV as at best, objects of charity, or as a danger to wider society, and often as the culpable victims of their own moral failure. Peter

Larkin, a second CAL delegate also living with AIDS, and Jack detected a deliberate silencing of the voices of those diagnosed with HIV. It seemed an offence against natural justice that people living with HIV should be talked about, but not listened to. Increasingly frustrated by the lack of discussion or possibility of alternative views being expressed Jack put on his roman collar and during a break between speakers he stood near the podium and raised a banner which read 'The Church has AIDS'.

He had not intended to speak, but at the last minute, in a loud voice he announced: "I am living with AIDS, and people with AIDS have no voice at this conference." Quickly the Vatican security men bundled him out and he was detained by the Vatican police. 'The Church has AIDS' was the headline relaying the story in the next day's press, adding to the already controversial worldwide coverage of this conference.

Over time his health deteriorated and gradually his public ministry ceased. He became more monastic and solitary and sought his God and peace in gardening. He had an allotment near his house in Fulham and loved growing and giving away vegetables. He bought a wee croft in the middle of nowhere in eastern Scotland and spent many

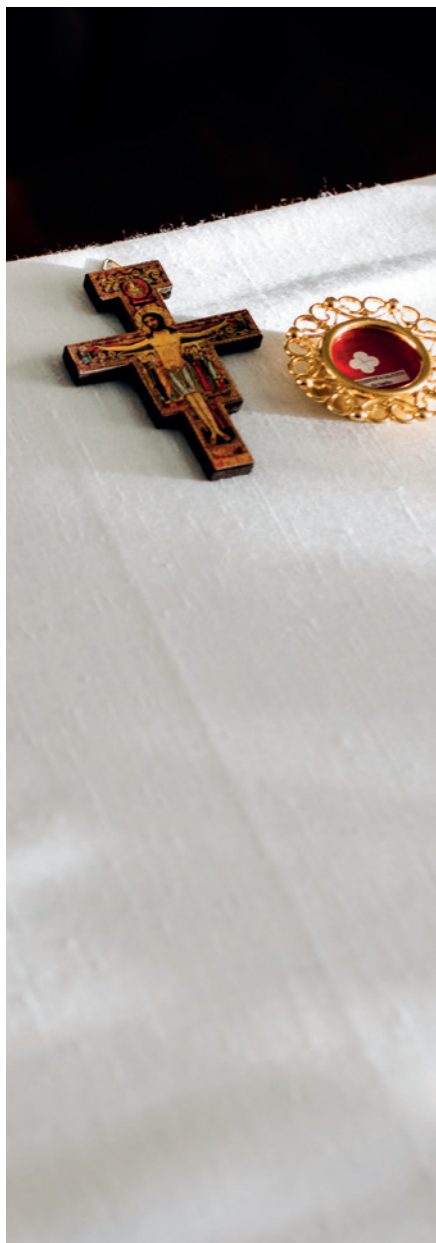
happy times there recharging his batteries and getting used to failing health. In the last decade of his life he had to endure several forms of cancer. Fr. John 'Jack' White died earlier this year after a lengthy stay in Nazareth House Care Home in Hammersmith.



Sr. Dorothy Bell, RSCJ.

8th Sept. 1924 - 6th March 2019

Sr. Dorothy Bell was a member of the Society of the Sacred Heart since 1947, and a former principal of Digby Stuart College, Roehampton University. She was also one of the first religious sisters to become involved in supporting people living with HIV, and in particular their parents. She was AIDS Coordinator for the Archdiocese of Southwark until 2006, a Patron of Catholic AIDS Link (CAL), and a founding Director of the London Ecumenical AIDS Trust (LEAT) until its closure in 2014.



Supporting CAPS

Getting Involved

If you have felt encouraged in your faith, if you have been inspired by what you've read in this newsletter, please consider donating your time, your talent, or your financial support.



You can donate by contributing online through our secure PayPal connection: scroll down to the lower left side of our website, www.caps-uk.org. Or call / email us for information on setting up a direct debit.

You can also support us by signing up for 'Give as You Live', an online service that collects donations from over 4,000 retailers – sending a small percentage of your purchase's value to the charity of your choice. Register for free at <http://give.as/charity/catholics-for-aids-prevention-and-support-caps> or via www.giveasyoulive.com; search and select 'Catholics for AIDS Prevention and Support'; and go shopping online with one of their registered retailers. At no cost to you, the website collects a donation from the retailer and sends it to CAPS.

If you have skills that you're willing to share in marketing, research, policy writing, computing, press/media, finance, or fundraising, please contact Vincent at chair@caps-uk.org to arrange a conversation.

It is your generosity that allows CAPS and Positive Catholics to support and strengthen people who are in need.



Notices & Dates

World AIDS Day Sunday 1st December 2019

Remember to include prayers for all those affected by HIV and AIDS in your church on the weekend of Saturday Nov. 31st and Sunday Dec. 1st. Use the prayers provided on any of CAPS websites, or compose prayers of your own and share them by email with CAPS. People living with HIV are often unseen and unheard. Our public prayers around World AIDS Day give us an opportunity to show our concern; a small step to express solidarity with all those affected.

World AIDS Day services

World AIDS Mass, 18.00, Monday, 2nd December 2019, at the Church of the Immaculate Conception (Farm Street Jesuit Church), 114 Mount Street, Mayfair, London W1K 3AH. A Reception will follow in the Parish Hall. All are welcome! Further details: LGBT+ Catholics Westminster Pastoral Council lgbtcatholicswestminster@gmail.com

Sacred space to remember and pray

From the evening of Friday Nov. 29th until Weds. Dec. 4th the Catholic AIDS Link Memorial Book, Quilt Panel and 'Pieta Silk' will be on display in the St. Aloysius Chapel, also at the Church of the Immaculate Conception (address above). The display is free to visit. This is provided as a contemplative space to mark World AIDS Day in order to remember those who have died and pray for all those living with HIV today.

Christian Communities Welcoming LGBT People

In London the RC Diocese of Westminster extends a special welcome to LGBT people at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, 114 Mount Street, London, W1K 3AH. Especially at the 17.30 Mass each 2nd and 4th Sunday of each month. lgbtcatholicswestminster@gmail.com - lgbtcatholicswestminster.org

CAPS is in partnership with 'The Passionists'. Our members and friends are encouraged to visit the website at www.passionists-uk.org The Community of the Passion welcomes all people who wish to explore faith and life and are committed to social justice.

A 'Must' for your Diary

Why not pick a date now and mark your calendar, even if it is 2020, when you will use the *Positive Faith* resource in some way in your local community. Make a start, begin a conversation with others in your church, college or school.

Making Your Church or Clinic a More Welcoming Place for People Living with HIV

CAPS 'All Are Welcome' Card is an easy way to let people know that they have found a welcoming church. It is an easy way to raise awareness about HIV and faith in your congregation or your local clinic. We have designed this card to be ecumenical, and to offer the best possible points of contact.

We invite you to cut this page out. Share it with clergy or other church leaders. Have a discussion with your pastor or parish council about what it means to display this card at your church. Stick it on your church bulletin board. Bring it to the clinic or surgery. Let people know.

Below is some basic information about HIV that can help shape the discussion:

- There are more than 35 million people infected with HIV globally.
- Although medicines have become more available, only 32% of children and 41% of adults who are eligible, actually received HIV treatment in 2014. Millions remain in need of essential treatment, care and support, especially in Africa, a continent that cries out for justice.
- 108,000 people are infected with HIV in the UK.
- Approximately 50,000 are living with HIV in London. (Southwark Diocese has the highest resident number of people living with HIV.)
- An estimated 1 in 5 people living with HIV in the UK do not know that they are infected.
- We know that there are significant numbers of Catholics and Christians living with HIV.
- It is very likely that in your Parish there are people living with HIV, or families who have a member living with HIV.
- Catholics for AIDS Prevention and Support (CAPS) is the only national Christian response focussed on the needs of PLWH in the UK.
- The 'Positive Catholics' ministry is the only national Christian pastoral ministry to people living with HIV in the UK.

CAPS resources & Positive Catholics materials are also available for download from our website. A single flyer or poster might be the lifeline that someone needs.





All are welcome in this place

For faith sensitive HIV support

Email: info@caps-uk.org

Phone: 07505 608 655

Websites: www.caps-uk.org

www.positivecatholics.com

For general HIV advice & support

THT Direct: 0808802 1221

www.POSITIVEFAITH.net