

## *Loaves & Fishes Project* *Newsletter June 2026*



On June 5th, as a Community, we remember our Mother Foundress, Emily Ayckbowm. Emily was born this day in 1836, in Chester where her father was a parish priest.



Even before Emily founded the Church Extension Association (CEA) in 1864, she was already ahead of her time with regard to social justice. Between 1857-61 Emily and her sister visited and tended the sick and dying. They also gathered underprivileged children for some rudiments of instruction, held

evening classes for adults and even attempted to conquer pew-ownership by installing some of her proteges on empty cushioned seats. But alas! The owners were sure to appear sooner or later, and would scornfully sweep the intruders out into the aisle.

The CEA began officially in 1864, coming out of the call to educate children and care for those in need who were neglected by society. On the 5th April 1870, Emily received the Habit at which point the Community of the Sisters of the Church was founded.

*“Let no one in these days think to find in Religious Life a peaceful seclusion and refuge from the care and weight of active responsibilities.*

*It is the vocation of most Religious of the present day to renounce the retirement of the cloister and work for God amid the din and jar and the unrest of modern life.”*

*Mother Emily (1836-1900)*

Here in Bristol, we feel particularly close to Mother Emily’s essence. Early in the life of the Community the local Bishop in London was somewhat unhappy about the Sisters helping foundling children. He felt strongly that this was encouraging promiscuity, and accused the Community of “indiscriminate charity”! I imagine that you can guess Emily’s reaction - she promptly crossed him off the Community’s patron list and carried on. Interestingly, years later, the Church of England put together what we call the ‘5 Marks of Mission’, with the 3rd telling us to respond to human need by loving service. In our Community Rule of Life we have similar words: to minister to human need however it is encountered. I wonder what that Bishop would say now?

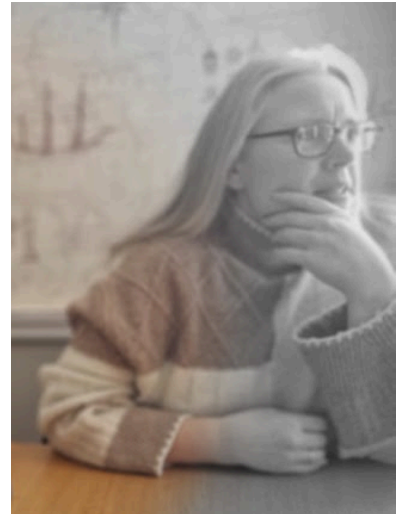
The Sisters in Bristol continue to wave the flag for indiscriminate charity - but are only able to do so with your help. So, on behalf of us all, thank you.

***Teresa Mary CSC***

Sister-in-Charge

## From Teresa Mary CSC

I have been back in Bristol for 10 years and most of that time has been as Sister-in-Charge. During this time, I have completed my training to be a priest, been ordained and have almost finished my curacy. Over the past few years, as I have shared with many of you, we have been trying to futureproof the *Loaves and Fishes Project*, and with the new team in post, in a way, my work is done. I have managed to make myself redundant! So, I am going to go away.... not for ever, just for several months sabbatical. I am heading for the USA to spend a little time with a friend. Then I am heading for Canada to stay with our Sisters for about four months. After this time away I will be going on a 30 day IGR (Individually Guided Retreat) in north Wales. My role on my return is yet to be finalised, but I will probably still be Sister-in-Charge and take on a more Chaplain-type role for the project. The good news is that our Sr Aileen will be staying here in Bristol while I'm away.



## Our Client Numbers

Throughout the years, we have seen the number of clients we serve fluctuate. Now, at this time, with all that we offer, our numbers have settled at around 250 per week. Our core offering continues to be the ambient bag costing about £10 (as illustrated on the back page).

## Finance

Talking about money is never easy, we often feel uncomfortable - it is part of our culture that money doesn't get discussed.

However, we are a charity, and money is key to our continued work.

We are so grateful for all the donations we receive and over the years you, our donors, have kept us going. Our expenses have been kept as low as possible. We will continue to do so.

However, with two paid members of staff our running costs will be increasing.

Previously we have shared with you the cost of buying food and the expense of fuel top-up. This time, we would like to explain some of the hidden running costs associated with the *Loaves and Fishes Project*.

We have a daily market. When it rains, we need to cover the goods and volunteers - we use large gazebo-type covers for shelter. The last few we bought were £85.99 each and we need a minimum of 3. The market also requires tables; the cost varies from £75-£100. We have lots - generally on food market days we use 5-6 at a time. Thankfully they do not wear out as quickly as the gazebos! Flatbed trolleys for moving items cost £30-£50.

Additional costs such as those associated with our printer, and indeed the publishing of the newsletter need to be absorbed.

We also have the ongoing running costs of the building itself.

With all that has been mentioned above, we appreciate every donation, every penny counts. As always, thank you.

## Easter 2026

In our previous newsletter we were asking for Easter Eggs. Well, you surpassed our expectations - we received around 1000 Eggs!



We continue to give out Easter Eggs throughout the Easter season - one can never have enough chocolate.

To say thank you, really doesn't express our gratitude, but for what it is worth:

***Thank You!***

## Donations

We are primarily a food bank; this is how we began and we feel that this should remain our main focus. However, if our clients don't have electricity or gas, they can't cook the food we provide. As you know, we offer help with fuel top-up payments. The way we work this is, in the colder times £15 per month, warmer seasons we drop this down to £10. Looking at average prices, the cost per day of electricity is around £5. The reality is that we offer a top-up, not a solution. Up to 30 people per week are helped by this ministry.

Toiletries are offered when in stock. The importance of being able to offer these items is beyond words. Can you imagine how humiliating it is for our clients to ask for soap, or sanitary products? This is something we would love to be able to offer more of but not at the detriment of food donations.

The physical food donations do not come in at the quantity they once did. Times change. We understand this. The result of this is that we need to bulk-buy more food. The plus is that we don't have to date check so many items!

The dilemma we have is what to ask of you, our supporters, when it comes to donations.

Ambient food items will always be at the top of our list, closely followed by cash donations. Toiletry items are always welcome, along with pet food.

Please continue to help us in any way that you can. We genuinely cannot do this ministry without your support. And we encourage you to share this magazine, especially the back page, with your friends and colleagues.

### Volunteer opportunity

We are looking for help with collecting excess food from supermarkets. So, if you have a car (or suitable vehicle), would you or someone you know be available once a month, on a Monday or Tuesday, to collect from a designated supermarket in Bristol? If so, please get in touch with Elana and Lukasz.

## Monica

*Without God, I am nothing*

Monica is celebrated at the *Loaves and Fishes* project for the delicious home-cooked meals she prepares for the volunteers. There are often calls for second-helpings of all the wonderful dishes, bursting with flavour. When Monica is not in the kitchen, she is often to be found in the cafe, where she likes to serve hot drinks, sandwiches and biscuits to the clients. She enjoys meeting new people and experiencing different cultures when working at the serving hatch.



Monica's roots are in Jamaica and she has three lovely children and six cherished grandchildren. She worked for many years for the NHS at the BRI Hospital.

Monica joined the project over ten years' ago when she was introduced to Sister Hilda Mary and Sister Rosie at a friend's birthday party. Monica asked to become a volunteer, and on her very first shift she was presented by Sister Hilda Mary with an apron bearing her name. This proved to be a very good investment indeed.

Monica would like to thank the Sisters for the opportunity to share their space. She particularly values spending time with volunteers and staff.

Monica loves the Lord and plays an important part in the spiritual life of the house by attending the Eucharist.

## Training Opportunities for our Volunteers

Over the years we have tried to offer “opportunities for learning” for our volunteers. Complying also with current regulations this means that we do need designated First Aiders, Fire Marshals and several of the team with Food and Hygiene Certificates. We are about to launch the latest round of training.

### James



James is a valued member of the ‘daily’ volunteer team and has been with us since April 2019. In that time, James has been baptised, confirmed and admitted as an Associate of the Community of the Sisters of the Church. James values his friendship with the Sisters.

When asking James why he volunteers he replied: I have to. I have a lot to make up for. From £145 of heroin a day and £75 of crack cocaine a day, my life has changed completely for the better through my faith in God. Being part of this group, the Community, and the project helps me on a daily basis to ‘sort out the wheat from the chaff’. I try to keep the good and let go of the other.

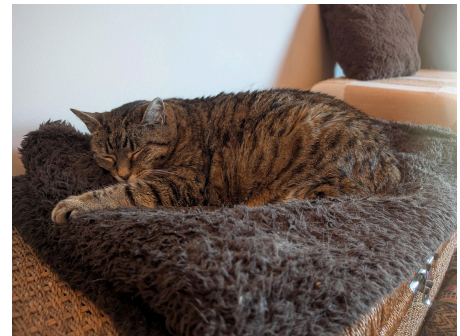
## Lukasz



Lukasz Warec also joined our team in March 2026, taking on the post of Project Administrator. Originally from Poland, Lukasz has been in the UK since he was 18, and worked mainly in hospitality. In conversation with Lukasz he said this about his role: That I love the ministry here, the making a difference to the local community. I felt that this would be more than just a job. I have worked in big corporate organisations and coming into this environment is more rewarding and feels homely. Lukasz has a particular interest in IT and computers, hoping to do further study in this area. Lukasz is keen to use his skills to help bring the *Loaves and Fishes Project* into the digital era, for example, increasing our online presence.

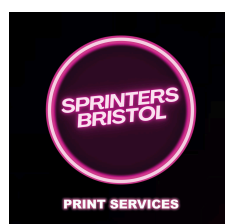
## Current Household

The household members remain the same; Teresa Mary, Anna and Sandra, oh and of course, Maud!



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the printers we use:



## Elana

Elana joined the team in March 2026, with the newly created post of Project Manager. Elana's working background includes: hospitality, care, chaplaincy and banking, to name but a few. She is married with three children - and pets too, a cat and two dogs. As a committed Christian, this role presents her with the opportunity to give back to the community in an environment that will be both challenging and fun. Elana has lived in England for nearly 26 years, having grown up in South Africa. Elana shared, "I like helping people, for me that is the key thing in everything I do. It's why I have always done volunteer work and now I have a job where I get paid to do what I love. Thank you."



## For your prayers

Please pray:

- For ongoing funds for the project
- For our volunteers, staff and supporters
- For Sisters and Alongsiders:

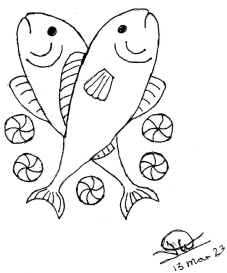
Aileen, Anna, Sandra, Teresa Mary

## Artwork around our property



The spray-paint is on the side of the Emily and was done by a local artist

The sculpture was created by a volunteer, Leon Mitchell (no relation to Sandra). It began with a piece of driftwood



Designed by Tom Wright, this image first appeared on Teresa Mary's ordination stole in 2023. We have since adopted it as our official logo for the Loaves and Fishes Project.

# *Sponsor a monthly Food Parcel for the Loaves and Fishes Project*



for just £10 you could pay for this food parcel  
we also offer a bag that contains meat  
as well as a vegetarian and halal friendly option  
Is this something you could help with?

Contact:

07597 898829

[bristoladmin@sistersofthechurch.org](mailto:bristoladmin@sistersofthechurch.org)