

people in need people in need people in need

Practical help for city's needy

Coventry City Mission introduce a new project to help the needy in their city



● Phikiswa: Longing to be well again band divorced her.

Feeling totally abandoned, Dadirayi contemplated suicide. Then, after a while, she thought of how God had blessed her and started to trust him. More fruitless hospitalisation followed, then she was rushed into her local Shamva Hospital and leprosy was diagnosed.

"I was afraid that I would be rejected by my community," Dadirayi remembered. "I even thought of death, but was told not to worry because leprosy is curable."

She was put on MDT and then transferred to Harare Central Hospital where two TLM doctors treated both the osteomyelitis in her left foot and the leprosy which had caused loss of feeling in her hand. She then met Sister Catarina, from the Zimbabwe Self-Reliance Leprosy Trust, an organisation specialising in socio-economic rehabilitation, who enrolled her on a clothes-making course. Dadirayi was the best student and became the teacher for a while!

Every Friday Sister Catarina taught her about the Lord Jesus. Then Dadirayi went to a Christian conference and asked Jesus into her heart as Lord and Saviour.

Dadirayi's struggles continue. She is often in hospital and has to spend valuable time away from her



precious children. Yet she is an amazing disciple.

"I know I am born again!" she exclaimed. "I am a new creation in Christ and everything is new (2 Corinthians 5:17). My friends, family and neighbours have also come to know the Lord Jesus through me. There is no church close to where we live in Shamva, so every Sunday we come together as a group and have a church service at my house. I will never forget God's goodness to me. I would be nothing without knowing him. He is the owner of my life forever and ever. Amen."

So much can be achieved with so little. Most of the physical impairments and disfigurements resulting from late presentation can be limited by the skills of TLM's medical staff. TLM's life-transforming vocational training programmes and enterprise loans also help former patients to gain employment, independence and acceptance in society.

Terry Vasey, President of ILEP (The International Federation of Anti-Leprosy Associations), recently commented that leprosy will remain a problem for many years to come. TLM will remain committed to the cure and care of people affected by leprosy, especially in countries where the leprosy burden has not been reduced, until the last person to have suffered from this hideous disease is no longer alive.

■ Simon Watkinson is editor at TLM in Peterborough and lives in Cambridgeshire

KAREN has two young children. After her relationship with her partner broke down, she found herself out on her own with the children – and with very little furniture in her new flat. John has suffered mental health problems for years. Now he's out of hospital, a lot more stable, and in a home of his own. The trouble is he's only got a bed and a cooker. He needs more help.

Karen and John are typical of the kind of people who are being targeted by Coventry's new Turnaround Project.

Asylum seekers, families on low incomes, the elderly, homeless people being re-housed, single people in vulnerable circumstances – all can have serious housing needs and problems. And with that need comes

'We have been working towards this moment for a long time'

the need for basic furniture and functional electrical goods – without a long wait and at a minimal cost.

The Turnaround Project aims to meet these needs by recycling unwanted household goods which are either donated to the project or collected during house clearances.

The project is being run by Coventry City Mission, a Christian charity which has over 15 years' experience of working with some of Coventry's neediest families. They have been all too aware of the need for a second-hand furniture project for several years. They already run a highly successful clothing project – also called Turnaround – offering nearly-new clothes at a fraction of charity-shop prices. And a small part-time pilot furniture project run on Coventry's Wood End estate – an urban estate with considerable social needs – was soon distributing around 30 items each week.

"We have been working towards this moment for a long time," says Neville Carpmail, director of the City Mission. "There are hundreds of people and families in the city who have a real need for decent, low-cost furniture and other household goods, and up until now there has been nowhere they can go for it. That means people who are already living on the edge have even more hurdles they need to get over before they can start to stand on their own two feet."

People in need are referred to the Project by appropriate organisations, like social services and other statutory agencies, or social landlords, char-



● The Turnaround Warehouse is open to the public every weekday except Tuesday

ities and voluntary organisations. They are then able to choose the items they need to help them set up home, on payment of a small handling charge. Project workers deliver the items free of charge.

Turnaround has the support of a wide range of agencies in the city including Coventry City Council, Agenda 21, The Poverty Delivery Group and Housing Associations acting as social landlords.

Start funding has been provided by Local Government and many businesses and charitable trusts. An application for European funding is in the pipeline and other funders are being sought.

However, although the practicalities of the project might be about recycling furniture – there is a wider agenda.

Neville Carpmail explains: "There is a wider vision. This centres on our call to serve others in the name of Christ in any area where needs are expressed. We hope to be sensitive to our clients' spiritual needs, whether specifically expressed or not, and to seek to help them know of God's love for them. But more than that, to help them become aware of his desire to develop and deepen a personal relationship with them."

"That's a lot to ask when all they came in for was a three-piece suite – but our God is so much bigger than we can imagine and he so often uses the chance remark with astounding results!"

The project opened its doors to its first customers at the beginning of June, after spending a month building up its stocks of furniture and other goods.

So far, Turnaround has been open for some 18 weeks and staff have been encouraged by the response so far.

Project Manager David Martin

says: "So far we have received well over 450 donations of furniture and household electrical goods, totalling in excess of 850 items. From these generous donations we have been able to help somewhere in excess of 330 families and/or individuals to date, scattered across many districts of Coventry."

"During this time we have forged links with the district offices of several local housing associations. We hope to help individuals needing household items generally, and also to speed up the entry of new tenants, thus reducing the number of housing voids. Close links have also been established with the local Refugee Centre."

"Our contact with a variety of Social Services Offices in the city has also enabled us to be a source of household items for their clients in need. It's all going very well and we are pleased with the way deliveries have taken off."

■ The Turnaround Project can be contacted on 024 7666 1400

MORE INFORMATION

TLM is an international Christian medical charity working in 28 countries and currently caring for some 220,000 leprosy sufferers, of whom over 60,000 are newly detected cases. For more information about TLM click on www.leprosymission.org.uk or write to: The Leprosy Mission, Goldhay Way, Orton Goldhay, Peterborough PE2 5GZ; tel: 01733 370505; fax: 01733 404880



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