

I am sure we have all experienced times in our lives when we have needed help. The charities we choose to support ensure that there are people there offering help in times of need. As Sr Gillian explained in her May letter, over £3000 was left from last year and could be distributed immediately. This was to include seven charities to receive £250 each: three of the charities focus upon different aspects of stress and mental health and here is some information about each.

It is well known that stress and mental health issues can arise from a variety of common causes, such as work-related pressures, family issues, financial struggles and health problems. The mental health charity Mind states that 1 in 6 people report experiencing a common mental health problem (like anxiety and depression) in any given week in England.

Turning Point NI (Northern Ireland) is a mental health hub for those experiencing any form of mental crisis. It aims to reduce the frequency of suicide and self-harm, it promotes positive mental wellbeing, resilience and provides support to bereaved families. Self-harm is a major public health issue among young people in the UK. It affects at least one in 15 young people and some evidence suggests that rates of self-harm in the UK are higher than anywhere else in Europe.

The Message (Manchester) is a Christian charity that shares the love of Jesus Christ in words and actions with the hardest-to-reach young people and communities. They work in ways that help with the many causes of mental health issues. One aspect of their work is Community Groceries. They receive fresh surplus food donated by local supermarkets and sell it in a way that makes the weekly cost of shopping affordable. Thus, they aim to reduce one of the major worries of many poor families. In prisons their teams support men, women and young people through mentoring, courses, chapel services, Alpha and much more right up to their release date. Upon release they provide jobs, training and discipleship to ex-offenders looking to turn their lives around as well as those who have significant barriers to employment.

Poor mental health can often be caused by health issues, either one's own or of a relative or friend. **Maggies Manchester** is there to help at all stages with all types of cancer diagnosis. They provide a centre where people can get help, advice and support. As it says on their website 'the kettle is always on – just come in.'

Help in times of need can be vital to us all and I hope that as we move through the year we can continue to raise funds to support the projects you have suggested going forward. Finally, let us not forget ourselves and those close to us; signs of stress and anxiety may go unnoticed. We need to check that we are not experiencing undue pressure and that others around us are keeping well, both physically and mentally.

Sr Mary Holmes