St Martin in the Fields Charity

The Philanthropy Christmas Appeal



100 years of Compassion and Action

A Legacy of Philanthropy

A century ago, Revd Dick Sheppard opened the doors of St Martin-in-the-Fields and asked people to help those in need at Christmas. His call for compassion, amplified by BBC Radio 4, has become the foundation of the St Martin-in-the-Fields Christmas Appeal.

The generosity of people across the country has turned that message into action, helping hundreds of thousands of people facing homelessness find safety, hope and a place to call home.

People like Siobhan*, whose courage and resilience you will read about overleaf.

Behind every Christmas appeal, every donation and every life changed is a simple act of kindness: **people like you, philanthropists, choosing to help another person when they need it most.**

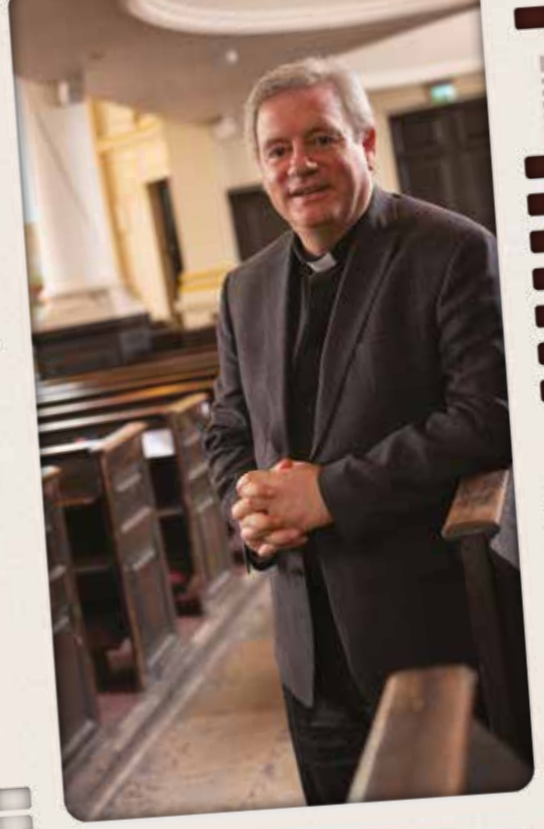
Today[1], with record numbers of families living in temporary accommodation in England alone and numbers[2] of those rough sleeping on a single night at an all-time high, your continued support is more vital than ever.

This Christmas, as we look ahead to the next chapter of our story, will you help us carry this legacy forward, helping us to make a difference this year, next year, until we are no longer needed?

Thank you

Revd Dr Sam Wells
Vicar of St Martins

[1]Statutory homelessness in England: January to March 2026 - GOV.UK
[2]Rough sleeping snapshot in England: autumn 2025 - GOV.UK





Over the past decade alone, with thanks to supporters like you, we have provided more than £16.5 million in Emergency Grants (VRF) to help an estimated 76,500 people find home, hope and stability.

Image top:
©**Amanda Bennett**

Image bottom:
Volunteers sort through appeal donations, 1950s

100 years of the St Martin-in-the-Fields Christmas Appeal



The Revd. Dr. Dick Sheppard, Vicar of St Martin-in-the-Fields from 1914. © St Martin-in-the-Fields, Westminster.



Christmas at St Martin-in-the-Fields, c 1930s.© St Martin-in-the-Fields, Westminster.



BBC church service broadcasts from St Martin-in-the-Fields from 1914. © St Martin-in-the-Fields, Westminster.

1914 - 1926

The 'ever-open' door

Revd. Dick Sheppard opens St Martin's doors to people in need, offering practical help, companionship and a place of welcome.

1927

The beginning of the Christmas Appeal

The Christmas Appeal was first mentioned in the December 1927 edition of the Radio Times, marking the beginning of the Christmas Appeal as it is known today.

1956-1984

A national institution

Under the Vicar Revd. Austen Williams, a natural broadcaster, the Appeal expanded its national reach.

1982

The first £100,000

Annual giving passes £100,000 for the first time for a Christmas Appeal that had grown into a festive tradition.

2010

£1 million

The Appeal raises over £1 million for the first time, a powerful demonstration of what generations of individual acts of generosity can achieve together.

2014

Support beyond Christmas

The St Martin-in-the-Fields Charity is established and, building on the Appeal's legacy, it creates the Frontline Network, offering training and mental health support to vital frontline workers across the UK.

2026

The centenary year

As the Appeal celebrates its 100th Appeal, we aim to raise £2.8 million to support people facing homelessness and carry a century of generosity into the next chapter.





"Now I know that there's no shame because I'm living proof homelessness can happen to anyone."âSiobhan

Much has changed in 100 years, but the need for a safe, permanent place to call home remains as urgent as ever.

Today, 135,580[3] households in England are living in temporary accommodation, the majority with children, while more than 360,000 households approached their council for help last year because they were facing homelessness.

Siobhan's* Story

Behind these numbers are families like **Siobhan's...**

Siobhan and Dave bought their first home by 2001. Dave worked as a bricklayer and Siobhan raised their children. Then Covid brought Dave's work to a halt and his mental health deteriorated. The couple took a mortgage break, believing it would help get them back on their feet.

Instead, the arrears mounted and the family's financial security declined.Siobhan cut back wherever she could. Sometimes, she went without food so her children could eat. In winter, she could only afford to heat one room, so the whole family would gather in her bedroom to keep warm.

"It used to be that I'd have £50 for a grocery shop, the children were being fed but I wasn't."

[3]Statutory homelessness in England: January to March 2026 - GOV.UK

"It was exhausting, as soon as they went to school I'd sigh with relief because I knew they would be warm and getting a hot meal."

After years of struggling, the bank moved to repossess their home, the place where their children had taken their first steps and shared Christmases. Siobhan had no idea how she would prevent her family home from becoming homeless.

"The hardest part is that there was only four years left on the mortgage, the house we had been paying for over 20 years".

When Siobhan found a house to rent, she faced one final barrier, she couldn't afford the deposit.

Through First Housing, Northern Ireland, an Emergency Grant from St Martins-in-the-Field Charity helped her secure the property and gave her children somewhere safe to call home.

After years of uncertainty, knowing her children will have a home for Christmas has brought Siobhan enormous relief. Thanks to the grant, her family can look forward to the festive season with the security of a roof over their heads and the chance to begin rebuilding their lives.







Through changing times, the St Martins Christmas Appeal has continued to evolve, responding to the realities of homelessness and helping families like Siobhan's when they need it most.

Today, as the cost of living rises and affordable housing becomes increasingly difficult to find, even relatively small upfront costs can stand between someone and a safe place to call home. This is where our Emergency Grants (VRF) make a vital difference.

As winter draws in and the need for warmth, security and the sense of belonging we associate with Christmas becomes more important than ever, demand for our Emergency Grants is growing.

Our Emergency Grants (VRF)

An Emergency Grant (VRF) of up to £650 can help people across the UK overcome the immediate costs that might otherwise prevent them from securing or keeping a home.

Grants can cover deposits, rent in advance, moving expenses and other essential costs, such as obtaining identification. With decisions made within just five days, they provide practical lifeline at the moment it matters most – turning the possibility of a home into a reality, rather than allowing an opportunity to slip away.

For Siobhan and her family, an Emergency Grant (VRF) helped remove the financial barrier to securing their new home. Their story is just one example of how timely, practical support can change the course of someone's life – offering not just a roof over their heads, but the chance to find safety, stability and a place to belong.

"When Padraic came round and said that he'd managed to get the St Martins grant I could have hugged him, I cried tears of joy."
Siobhan







Your support this Christmas

This Christmas, we want our Emergency Grants (VRF) to reach even more families like Siobhan's.

With winter approaching, your support can make a profound difference to people facing homelessness, when warmth, safety and shelter matter most.

"That grant was a lifeline."

Siobhan

Will you play a leading role in our 100th Christmas Appeal by helping us raise £500,000 in philanthropic support?

Your generosity will help fund our **Emergency Grants (VRF) over the approaching winter months**, providing practical, timely support to help people secure a home or remain safely housed. Your support will offer more than shelter: it will provide the foundation for stability, dignity and belonging.

At the heart of St Martin's has always been a simple belief: when someone is in need, there should always be an open door and someone there to help. For a century, the generosity of supporters like you has helped turn this belief into action.

With your support, we can carry this legacy into the next century, keeping the door open to warmth, safety and the hope of a home, this Christmas and for years to come.

Thank you.

Listen to the BBC Radio 4 Christmas Appeal

St Martin-in-the-Fields with Revd Dr Sam Wells

Sunday 6th December 7:54-7:57

Sunday 6th December 23:46-23:49

Thursday 10th December 12:27-12:30

Making a Difference with Hugh Dennis

Sunday 6th December 9:45-9:59

Sunday 6th December 19:45-19:59

Friday 11th December 15:45-15:49

If you would like to support our Christmas Appeal, there are many ways for you to donate.

- **To donate by bank transfer**, please contact me at Philanthropy@stmartinscharity.org.uk
- **To donate online**, visit smitfc.org/philanthropy
- **To donate via cheque**, send a cheque to: St Martin–in–the-Fields Charity, C/O Michelle Henry, 5 St Martin's Place, London, WC2N 4JH, United Kingdom

St Martin in the Fields Charity

Registered charity number: 1156305.

*Disclaimer: Siobhan's name has been changed to protect her privacy. The photographs are illustrative and feature a model, not Siobhan or her family.