

## **Communications Consultancy brief**

June 2021

### **1 Introduction**

The Connection at St Martins helps rough sleepers in central London to move away from the streets. Most of our service delivery takes place in Westminster and we have one supported accommodation project in Clapham. This brief has been produced because we would like to commission two interlinked pieces of work to help us to ensure all of our external communications support our ambitions for organisational growth and development.

An appendix (attached) provides context and information about our current communications approach based on work we've done over the past 2 years. This includes our communications "infrastructure", fundraising, trading, advocacy, recruitment, client and referral agency work and finally, our cross-site partners.

We have outlined what we think we need below, in terms of helping to further define our strategic communications aims and objectives and how we use our resources to best effect, including bringing in pro-bono support and further paid consultancy projects.

### **2 Our Objectives**

We consider the time to be right for us to start to plan a step change in our communications. This is intended to build on incremental developments in different ways across the organisation over the last 2 years. We are also considering the impact of the pandemic on our operating environment, particularly with our partners across the St Martins site and finally, the development of our trading subsidiary.

We are therefore shaping a new Communications and Advocacy strategy which encompasses how we use communications to deliver 3 key outcomes:

- achieving significant growth in fundraising income (and a link to our trading to encourage cross fertilisation of support);
- recruiting and retaining excellent staff and volunteers;
- making sure the people who need us can find us

An additional focus for us is to increase our influence with decision makers through targeted policy and campaigns work. This is not included in this brief as we have already taken advice and made decisions. However, it will be included in our overall strategy to ensure that advocacy doesn't pull apart from other communications.

We have a number of cross-site partners that we work with (detail in appendix) and recommendations should include how we can best work together with these partners to help achieve our objectives.

#### **2.1 Support required**

We would like to explore how we use our communications to make a step change and support overall organisational growth and development. We have a full-time Communications Manager who is spread across all areas of communications. Recently we have redeployed a more junior staff member to run our social media feed 2 days a week. The Director of Fundraising and Communications oversees the work but is not a communications specialist. The senior staff team act as spokespeople for the charity and we have Trustee level communications expertise. We are in the process of segmenting our audiences and defining the key motivations for engaging with us and expect to have completed this work before we take any next steps.

Whilst we are making good progress, critically, we do not have the skills and expertise in communications at a senior, strategic level and we need more capacity in the short term to help us create content and choose the right marketing channels. **At this stage in the charity's development, we would like to bring in the expertise for a short life piece of work to help shape our strategy and next steps.** This falls into two broad areas:

### **1. Guiding us in what we say about the charity and our work**

- What are our key generic messages, tone of voice, imagery etc. in existing (and potentially new) tools/assets so that we can improve our main brand communications;
- What are our key messages in our subsidiary brands (Poster Bakes and West End Homelessness)
- What do we want to say to specific fundraising audiences to drive growth in income (individual giving, major donors and companies) and recruit new support;
- What do we need to say about The Connection as an employer and volunteer engager, so that we can go on to upgrade and modernise our recruitment materials (we plan to bring in specialist support with systems etc.)
- How do we describe our services clearly and simply to two very different audiences
  - a) clients and referral agencies (so that people who need our help can reach us)
  - b) donors and supporters (so that people feel inspired to donate)

### **2. How we promote the charity and our work**

- What we need to be able to talk to our different audiences about different things, including:
  - a) Driving Fundraising and growth of new supporters, recruitment and clients/referrers
  - b) How we link between our subsidiary brands so that the activity is coherent, improves the donor/customer experience and supports cross fertilisation of support;
  - c) How we sit within the wider St Martins site and how we want to be represented by our site partners in their communications;
- How we might improve our reach (which could include a “big idea” or campaign)
- The practicalities of how we plan our communications, use organic marketing, buy the right media etc.
- How do we need to develop our web presence to make sure it best fits our requirements (for example introducing a client section, making it easy to donate, buy goods or apply for a paid/voluntary role, integrating with The Friends of The Connection, linking to the other St Martins cross site activities and vice versa);
- How we might best use digital marketing to help us achieve our objectives?

We expect the work to include a desk review of: our skeleton communications and advocacy strategy; all of our main communications work (website, annual review, general key messages, main brand and sub-brands, brand guidelines etc.); the communications that support our fundraising, trading, recruitment and client/referral routes; our social media feeds; the Crisis “Framework” approach; how we are reflected in cross-site communications such as the St Martins website, the St Martins Charity, cross site social media feeds etc.

We would also like the consultant to talk with our trustees (mainly those who are forming our new Fundraising and Communications sub-committee), some of our key staff members and volunteers (those in fundraising, communications and enterprise) and those who are not directly involved in communications. We would also be interested to hear from a few “critical friends” such as Crisis and The Passage as well as a couple of social enterprises which are a couple of years down the line from our enterprise work at The Connection. Finally, we’d be keen to have some peer reviews from our cross site partners, along with their thoughts on how we improve cross site communications mechanisms.

By exploring and addressing these questions, we will have the information we need to finalise a 3 year communications and advocacy strategy. This will include both firming up clear objectives and targets and identifying the work we need to do to make the best use of our resources. We intend to then pull together a plan of what is to be taken forward by the existing staff team, what we can turn into pro-bono projects for skilled volunteers/supporting companies (development of key messages, film making, social media content etc.) and, finally, what we will take forward as further consultancy projects.

**As a result of commissioning this work, we would like to be able to:**

- Make good, strategic decisions about how to communicate in the charity to meet our objectives for fundraising and enterprise growth over the coming 2 – 3 years;
- Experiment with more ambitious and sophisticated communications tools including digital marketing, building capacity, confidence and understanding in the team;
- Create and use a suite of contemporary, well designed communications tools with high quality content to ensure our key messages reach the right people (to include a user-friendly visual aid to describing our service offer at Adelaide Street;
- Put in place a single view communications calendar by audience and channel which can be updated by relevant staff members;
- Identify and scope out a series of smaller packages of work, so that we can either attract in pro-bono support from specialists, or pay for further pieces of consultancy work;
- Develop our fundraising support pipeline and our trading customer base in ways which are complementary and create synergy and with some realistic targets for growth;
- Improve our ability to recruit and retain excellent staff members and volunteers;
- Develop a more proactive approach to referrer and client communications about our service delivery;
- Provide a tangible set of recommendations to take into cross-site communications discussions about how to link our work with that of the wider site.

## **2.2 Digital Marketing Support**

The Connection at St Martins is really only in the foothills of exploring how it would be possible to use digital marketing to support income growth. We have a reasonable, and growing, social media presence. Content has become more varied and has improved. We have experimented with using Google ads through their charity scheme, but only to support our trading.

Our supporter base tends to be people who are aged 55+ and have heard about our work through the BBC Radio 4 Appeal. We do have other audiences – notably the employees of supporting companies. However, if we want to make sure we have a strong succession of supporters for the future, we are keen to build a younger audience now.

Our individual giving is going well and has been growing – hitting almost £500k in 2020/21 and we have forecast modest steady growth over the coming 5 years. We have around 1,200 regular givers. We have recently agreed to integrate our sister charity The Friends of The Connection into our individual giving campaigns. Our trading is targeted at the 25 – 35 age group and the branding, messaging and marketing are designed with that in mind. Whilst the trading company has its own marketing budget, we anticipate opportunities for linking charity and trading company digital marketing to support the growth of both income streams.

### **3 Expressions of Interest and selection process**

We have set aside a budget of up to £20,000 for this work, which is inclusive of VAT. Interested individuals, groups of individuals or agencies may let us know they are interested in taking forward the work by providing an outline of their relevant experience and expertise, as well as a proposal outlining how the brief would be approached and the work that would take place within the budget we have set.

**The deadline for expressions of interest is 9am on Monday 28<sup>th</sup> June.** We will be selecting individuals or agencies for a further discussion, planned for the week of 5<sup>th</sup> July with a view to awarding the work at the beginning of the following week. Our intention would be to start the project in August, finishing in October.

If you have any questions, please contact Natasha Theobald, Communications Manager by email: [Natasha.theobald@cstm.org.uk](mailto:Natasha.theobald@cstm.org.uk).

**Please email your proposal by 9am Monday 28<sup>th</sup> June 2021 to:**  
**[jobs@cstm.org.uk](mailto:jobs@cstm.org.uk)**

## Appendix

### A Information about our communications context and approach

As with most charities, we have a range of communications tools such as a website, social media feeds and an annual report. Alongside our generic communications, we also regularly communicate to the outside world for 5 main reasons:

- To generate funds (mainly individual giving appeals as well as major donors and companies);
- To increase our trading (we have an emerging enterprise called [Poster Bakes](#) which sells vegan baking kits and pick and mix)
- To recruit staff (with advertising in The Guardian, Charity Jobs and specialist publications depending on roles);
- To influence policy makers and engage in the debate about homelessness (we do engage with the media on rough sleeping but this can be reactive and risky, we have also identified 5 broad advocacy priorities);
- To tell agencies and clients about how to access our services and feed back to us about quality or developments in delivery;

A significant piece of communications work every year is our contribution to the [BBC Radio 4 Christmas Appeal with St Martins](#). This is run and managed by the St Martins Charity, a separate organisation with a UK-wide remit, who are one of several partner organisations on the St Martins site. We are a major beneficiary and provide supporting material through several case studies for the appeal.

[Our main website link is here](#)

[The St Martin in the Fields website link is here](#)

#### Development of “communications basics”

Over the past 3 years, we’ve made a number of positive incremental improvements across all of our communications. This has included policies around media handling, client involvement, social media and, most recently, a branding refresh. We are producing some key messages for us to use whilst we think through longer term communications strategy. These are based on work done by Crisis and The Frameworks Institute, which has been incredibly useful. Overall, for a charity of our size, we enjoy a very high profile and have a fantastic platform to build from.

We have one full time communications role at a middle management level who is overseen by the Director of Fundraising and Communications. During the Pandemic, we redeployed a junior staff member to work 2 days a week on our social media. She also provides on-line marketing for our enterprise for the remaining 3 days a week. We have 8000 followers on our Twitter account [@homelesslondon](#) and about 5,500 [Facebook](#) followers. Our [Instagram](#) presence is still in its infancy with 550.

Although the communications staff work really well and make a very positive contribution, we are held back from further development by the absence of communications expertise at a senior, strategic level. Although we have good communications oversight at a governance level, we are in the awkward position of being too small to justify a senior, full time role at this level. However, we feel that we have outgrown what we think we can achieve within our existing resources and structure.

## Work with the media

In 2019/20 we focused a lot on proactive media engagement and building our relationships/ profile with journalists, and gathered a lot of momentum as a result. We cultivated a strong partnership with ESI Media which resulted in multiple coverage in the Evening Standard and the Independent. We also received significant attention from our involvement in the World's Big Sleep Out in December 2019 and the Prime Ministerial visit we hosted in February 2020.

In early 2020, we invested in Vuelio for two years so that we can monitor the media for stories that mention us, other homelessness organisations, or key homelessness stories. It also allows us to access the UK's largest journalist database, which we have used to develop our own list of key media contacts. We also delivered media training to a core group of staff and are keen to expand on this.

Our media engagement work stalled at the start of the pandemic as services changed dramatically and other areas of work took priority. We worked closely with Crisis on their *Home For All* campaign which resulted in coverage of our hotels across the BBC. However, overall, capacity for proactive media engagement reduced during 2020/21.

Increased proactive media engagement is an opportunity for us in the future. We have received a pro bono offer of support from Finsbury Glover Hering and are keen to take advantage of this.

## Fundraising

We have a current strategic aim to grow our fundraising from £2m a year in 2017/18 to £3m a year by March 2023. This is going very well, particularly with companies and individual giving and we have agreed fundraising forecasts with growth to £3.5m a year. During the Pandemic, albeit with an exceptional set of circumstances, we raised over £3.6m. We see further opportunities in individual giving, major donor development and companies. We have never really used creative agencies other than for small pieces of branding work. We did recruit an individual giving specialist in early 2020 and we are likely to invest in a Major Donor post.

## Enterprise

We have been developing enterprise work over the past 2 years. During the Pandemic, we changed our plans and have created an on-line vegan bakery (Poster Bakes) which provides baking kits and pick and mix sweets. Launched in August 2020, Poster Bakes piloted vegan donuts, then moved to mail order baking kits. We sold over 2000 mince pie kits over Christmas (against an original sales target of 500) and have gone on to sell hot cross bun kits in the early spring. We have very recently launched vegan Pick and Mix sweets.

Poster Bakes has a lively Instagram community of 600 and has used contacts, alongside our existing high profile to persuade influencers to promote our products. They have also seen coverage in publications such as Tatler, Time Out and Stylist. Poster Bakes is targeting a younger audience and we are keen to link them to our fundraising pipeline as the business develops. We expect to achieve growth largely through digital marketing but have limited experience.

## Advocacy

We have spent time with a public relations consultant over the past couple of years and have now identified 5 advocacy priorities. We hosted a visit by the Prime Minister and Secretary of State in February 2020. Building on this work, we have agreed to add capacity for a specific strategic development, by putting in place a specialist Advocacy role for 2 years. This role will take forward

influencing work to enable our clients to access treatment services for mental health and drug and alcohol issues; involve us in the lobby to repeal the Vagrancy Act and replace it with something more contemporary and, finally; help us to shape our media messages in some of the most contentious areas (migration, tents, begging, enforcement action).

### Recruitment

By far our biggest external communications spend is on recruitment for staff, volunteers and trustees. Our approach is solid and we have made changes to our applications process to move it more on-line. However, we have not paid much attention to our “standard blurb”, nor how we present the organisation to the outside world in exciting, creative ways to attract excellent candidates.

### Client and referral agency communications

In contrast, in the past we have given very little attention to how we promote our services to the people who need them most. We have attended to the development of operational partnerships and we have a full time client involvement post – which helps us to bring forward the views of our clients. However, we have never made a concerted effort to have a “marketing plan” for our services. Having undertaken a major service re-organisation as a result of the pandemic, our client focus is much clearer and our role in the support system for homeless people in Westminster is better defined. This is the good basis for considering how we present our services to those who need us.

### Cross Site Working

The final part of this picture is that the St Martins site has a system of organisations, with 5 main entities but no hierarchy or group structure. Alongside The Connection, two others have major fundraising activity (The St Martins Trust and the St Martins charity). The business (the café, concerts, shop, venue hire etc.) has traditionally serviced the communications for its own activity and that of the worshipping element of the Church’s activity. The different entities manage their own communications separately which means there are silos, limited links and working protocols. This can create frustration and tension and is a wasted opportunity for supporting growth for everyone.

The pandemic has changed everything. The business has been very badly hit, with multiple redundancies and their previous communications function has gone. The St Martins Trust has undertaken very successful emergency fundraising campaigns. The Connection, Trust and Charity worked together on an effective cross site campaign for the first time. In the wake of 2020, new opportunities are now arising to work together with greater synergy. Therefore, we would like to ensure that our communications development work does take into account the opportunities for creating better links with our partners across the site.

## **B Communications objectives for 2021/22**

<b>Aim 5 We will have improved our profile and influence through excellent communications and evidence of impact;</b>	
5.1) Develop, agree and implement a step change in The Connection’s ‘voice’, brand, visual	5.1.1) Roll out our refreshed brand across all existing materials and web presence.
	5.1.2) Roll out the new key messages to support the new service model in external communications and hold briefings and workshops with all staff on use of these messages in their work.

identity and key messages. This will reflect our work “with” not “for” people who experience homelessness;	5.1.3) Produce the Annual Report, upgrading the design
	5.1.4) Review the brand and key messages in the light of the communications consultancy recommendations and create a plan for 202/23.
5.2) Collaborate with our partners across the St Martins site to ensure that cross-site communications are consistent in key areas (particularly homelessness) and create synergy where it is appropriate to do so;	5.2.1) Participate in cross site Communications Group and Programming Committee, sharing information about our work and feeding into any cross-site initiatives.
	5.2.2) Undertake a stakeholder feedback exercise about our service model, so that the rest of the site know more about our plans for service delivery.
	5.2.3) Undertake training/information sessions with volunteers and staff on site about how to refer clients into our services if needed.
	5.2.4) Support the Radio 4 Appeal with material to ensure it is as successful as it can be
	5.2.5) Instigate a discussion with the new SMITF CEO about how to work together to join up SMITF/Connection/other cross site communications and create a plan for 2022 onwards.
5.3) Provide the excellent communications support we need to achieve planned fundraising growth from £2 to £3.5 million and trading growth from £50k to £500k by 2024;	5.3.1) Produce and advertise a brief for a Communications consultancy/agency to work with us to identify the work we need to do to achieve the objectives in the Communications and Advocacy strategy with a particular focus on the fundraising and digital marketing elements.
	5.3.2) Set a budget to invest in a “step change” in our communications and agree best use of this budget with the Fundraising and Communications Sub Committee, based on recommendations from the consultancy/agency.
	5.3.3) Ensure the Enterprise marketing plans link to the fundraising communications to ensure cross-fertilisation of support where possible.
	5.3.4) Promote Enterprises to support sales where it is possible and appropriate to do so.
5.4) Increase our on-line and social media presence as the primary platform to support our communications objectives and income targets;	5.4.1) See above re digital marketing (must span both fundraising and enterprise) Continue to build social media presence to support fundraising and enterprise based on the recommendations from the digital marketing consultancy advice.
5.5) Significantly increase our influence with policy makers locally and nationally to achieve systemic changes for people	5.5.1) Agree the creation of a 2 year Advocacy Co-ordinator position, with a focus on “treatment” and the Vagrancy Act at a governance level and agree line management arrangements.
	5.5.2) Produce a broad plan and parameters for the role and recruit to the post.
	5.5.3) Consult internally and externally with partners (WHP members etc.) and design a treatment model suitable for supporting our clients away from rough sleeping and into accommodation and recovery.



sleeping rough, drawing on the experiences of our clients and practitioners;	5.5.4) Engage with policy makers locally, regionally and nationally to propose this model to be included in RSI and Health funding in order to pilot and roll out the approach.
	5.5.5) Create a strong link with a treatment specialist agency with an advocacy function to support this work (could be substance misuse or mental health), bringing credibility and additional connections/networks
	5.5.6) Liaise with Crisis, St Mungos, Homeless Link and others to bring support to this approach.
	5.5.7) Participate in the debate about the repeal of the Vagrancy Act and emerging alternatives.
	5.5.8) Create key messages for the media on our work, to cover “difficult” issues, to mitigate risk and reduce instances of reacting to stories.
	5.5.9) Put in place data collection to support our case for a more substantial treatment response for rough sleepers in central London
5.6) Modernise all of our recruitment communications so that The Connection attracts the best staff and volunteer team it can within the resources available to us;	5.6.1) Bring in consultancy/additional HR support to review our existing recruitment materials and systems, making proposals for improvements which also reflect the step change in communications outlined in 5.3.
	5.6.2) Implement the recommendations from the review of recruitment materials.
5.7) Build the capacity and skills of staff across the organisation to ensure that communications is a shared responsibility with the policies, procedures, training and resources to support this.	5.7.1) Put in place tools and day to day practise to celebrate success across the organisation internally. This will reflect both day to day “small victories” and wider strategic achievements linked to our client data or objectives. This is intended to ensure we recognise success but also to enable staff to “try out” our key messages to a “safe” audience.
	5.7.2) Run branding and key messages workshops with our staff to increase understanding of our communications work and enhance consistency.
	5.7.3) Review and update all client communications, introduce a client section to the website and create a system and process for on-line referrals.

## Vision

London, like many cities across the world, is an exciting and stimulating place to be. However, for some, its streets are a place to go when things have gone profoundly wrong and there is nowhere else.

When people are on the edge, rough sleeping, isolated and in despair there must be a place to turn. The Connection is there to be with people as they overcome their problems, recover and move on to a meaningful, fulfilling life.

However, this is not enough. The experiences of people on the edge matter. Their story must be told to those in a position of power and influence, so that **rough sleeping** is not an accepted feature of life in the UK.

## Mission

We empower people who are pushed to the edge, to move away from the streets for good by:

- Supporting people to recognise their own strengths, recover from crisis and move away from rough sleeping for good;
- Working with other specialist services to ensure that everyone receives the right support at the right time;
- Giving a voice to people we support and sharing their experiences with those in power, to create the changes we need to build a society where nobody is forced to sleep rough.

## Who we are

The Connection at St Martin's is here to be with people as they recover from life on the streets and move on to meaningful, fulfilling futures and a place to call home.

We work with people, not for them, and put every individual person at the centre of their recovery.

As part of St Martin-in-the-Fields, we have been on the front line helping people in crisis for over one hundred years, right in the heart of Westminster – which has more people sleeping rough than anywhere else in the UK.

## Why we're here

Every day, we meet people who've been forced into homelessness. People tell us how they were pushed to the edge; trying to hold on to a place to live while surviving on wages that make everywhere impossible to afford. People tell us about leaving hospital or prison without a safe place to go, and the unbearable strain of trying to get well or find work without a home.

When people have reached breaking point, they often feel like they have no options left and nowhere left to turn. The longer people are on the streets, the more difficult their situation gets and the harder it is to see a way out.

This is where we can make a difference – being there for people who need us the most, making a connection, helping to lift the pressures that have forced them into homelessness, and supporting them to change their lives in the way they want to.

## **What we do**

We're alongside people as they recover from life on the streets and move towards a meaningful, fulfilling future. With practical support, we help lift the pressures that push people into rough sleeping.

We work with people, not for them. There is no 'one size fits all' approach to tackling homelessness – everyone is unique. Our job is to help people move away from rough sleeping, changing their lives in the way that they want to, at their own pace.

Everybody can leave homelessness behind, but recovery from homelessness is often a very long process, and can be full of stops and starts. We build trusting relationships and offer services that build confidence and self-belief to support people every step of the way.

### **At The Connection we:**

- Get to know people and provide assessments to help people identify what support they would like and how we can best work together to meet their goals and aspirations;
- Provide support, advice and short-term case management to people who have lower support needs. This could include helping them to search for and get into work, and to access accommodation
- Provide onward referrals or supported reconnection to anyone whose needs can be better met elsewhere;
- Provide further assessments for people who have more complex needs. This could be a combination of rough sleeping, mental health issues, substance misuse, physical health and/or offending;
- Build positive relationships and work intensively with these people in the long-term – supporting them to recognise their own strengths, recover from crisis and move away from the streets for good;
- Run specialist outreach services to connect with people on the streets, get to know them, and encourage them to move away from the streets;
- Enable people to access the full range of support services – like nurses, psychologists and substance misuse treatment – to address the pressures that force people into homelessness, help them recover from life on the streets and move on to a meaningful, fulfilling future and a place to call home;
- Provide support to resolve migration issues make onward referrals when needed;
- Offer specific activities and groups that help people to build the skills, confidence and resilience to recover from homelessness;
- Offer practical services like showers & laundry facilities, hot meals, medical appointments and access to telephones and computers.

## **Who we help**

We help people who are rough sleeping in Westminster.

Life on the streets is humiliating and dangerous. Many of the people we work with have experienced abuse, trauma, violence, exploitation and stigma. They may also find it hard to trust and accept support from services, particularly if they have had past interactions which didn't work for them.

Being with people and building trust is a vital part of our job. We are flexible and treat everyone as an individual. We understand the traumatic impact rough sleeping can have and refuse to give up on people. The strength and quality of the connection between us and the people we work with is what sets us apart.

## Why we're called The Connection

**Connecting with people when it matters most** – when people are pushed to the edge, rough sleeping, isolated and in despair there must be a place to turn. We are there to be with people as they recover from life on the streets and move on to a meaningful, fulfilling future. We understand the traumatic impact rough sleeping can have and refuse to give up on people.

**Connecting people to a brighter future** – we help people to recognise their strengths, talents and ability to shape their own future. Everybody can leave homelessness behind, and we know that with the right support, people can build a future that's better than the present.

**Connecting people to themselves** – life on the streets is dangerous and isolating. Many of the people we work with have experienced abuse, trauma, violence, exploitation and stigma. We encourage people to rediscover their strengths, interests and talents, which is hugely important in helping people connect to themselves.

**Connecting with others** – to rebuild a life away from the streets, people need to access the right support at the right time. By connecting with specialist partners and working together, we meet people where they are and can offer the holistic support that everyone should have.

**Connecting with St Martin's** – As part of St Martin's, we have been on the front line helping people in crisis for over one hundred years, right in the heart of Westminster. **Being With** is the philosophy at the heart of St Martin's. We are committed to being present with others, ourselves, and our world.

**Connecting with those in power** – the experiences of people on the edge matter. We give a voice to the people we help and ensure their stories are told to those in power, to create the changes we need to build a society where nobody is forced to live on the streets.

## **Emerging St Martins in the Field key messages (still to be confirmed)**

### **The Heart of St Martins**

**Being With** is the philosophy at the heart of St Martin's.

- We are committed to being present to others, ourselves, and our world.
- We treat people and situations as complex but delightful gifts.
- We create settings for people to be with each other.

'St Martin's is a place where dreams turn into action. I love being here, because everyone here wants to make this the most inspiring place in the world.'

Revd Dr Sam Wells

### **Being With Each Other**

Did you know the heart of St Martin's has always been about building community?

We love bringing people together, so we've created opportunities for people to eat and drink, meet old friends and new, hear music, create art, share stories and explore ideas together.

We try to celebrate each and every person who comes into contact with us – across ethnicity and culture, sexuality and gender, perspectives and experiences. We treat each person as a mystery in all their **G L O R I O U S** uniqueness, rather than a problem to be fixed. Where would the fun be if we were all the same?

We draw together groups from across our different communities to help us grow in accessibility and in understanding the experience of disability, race, sexuality, and gender. And we break new ground in intersectional understanding of these topics, particularly in relation to faith, holding conferences and lectures on these topics each year.

Our café is especially designed to bring people together – whether to daydream or think around others, to meet up for a vibrant chat with old friends or family or to meet new friends. For as long as humanity has existed, food and drink has created space and time for friendships and collaboration. We want to continue that.

When people meet at St Martin's, great conversations happen. Many conversations have changed lives; some have changed the world. Shelter, Crisis, the Big Issue, Amnesty International, Liberty: all started with conversations at St Martin's.

Want to be part of our next world-changing conversation? *Meet at St Martins!*

### **Being With those on the Edge**

We try to be with everyone – but especially those on the edge. For us, the edge is very often where we find what really matters. Being on the edge is something many of us face at different points of our lives. It can be a time when we are on the cutting edge, not always understood as we seek to

imagine a better world. It might be times when we are on the edges of faith or belief and are seeking for an honesty and greater sense of meaning in our lives.

In particular, many members of our different communities are on the edge because they are or have been homeless.

Since 1924 the BBC has partnered with us and Radio 4 listeners to help homeless and vulnerably housed people. In 2020 our Christmas Appeal raised £4.2 million to support those facing homelessness throughout the UK. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00wh1dk>

We founded a charity called The Connection, which helps people move away from and stay off the streets of London by tackling the underlying causes of rough sleeping and offering practical help. We have even won awards for our Being With philosophy here <https://www.connection-at-stmartins.org.uk/>

Profits from our cafés and our other business ventures enhance our church and community projects – from glorious music to connecting with people seeking asylum.

Our patron saint, St Martin, was a Roman soldier who saw a man, naked and asking for help. He got down from his horse, took his red cloak, cut it in half and shared it with the man in need. That night he had a vision that the man was Jesus. Our team members come from a wide variety of faith perspectives: each is inspired by this story to treat each person with dignity and to share what we have in more than just token ways.

### **Being With Ourselves**

Being With applies to us too.

We try to make time for things that lift our spirits and help us to grow.

We have world-famous live music and original artwork across our site, giving space to household names as well as fresh new talent.

Our cafe develops a wide range of wholesome food and drinks, looking for plant-based options and food suitable to different diets wherever possible. We have thought about the layout of our café, ensuring there are places for those who wish to find a place to gather their thoughts as well as those who want to meet with a friend or six.

We host regular lectures, talks and discussion groups on truth, beauty and meaning, hearing from provocative or influential thinkers of our day – and sometimes from people who aren't so famous, but have a story to tell.

We are famous around the world for our music, and we continue to host inspiring live concerts and choirs in our building and online.

We value stillness. We have weekly Tai Chi classes and online meditation: you are very welcome to join.

### **Being With the Planet**

We try to be gentle with our planet, reducing things that destroy it, and increasing activities that work with it.

We are reducing our carbon emissions. Our café recycles all it can, and uses as much of its foodstuff as possible, reducing food waste. We source from local suppliers, building reliable relationships to support farmers. We partner with businesses who share our values and influence others to care like we do.

We are renovating our courtyard and church path to be an oasis of kind engagement with the natural world in the heart of concrete London.

We also like to preach what we practise. We hold discussions and invite speakers who are leading experts in this field.

We have a community-led Eco Church group that ensures ecology stays top of our agenda.

### **Being With our Neighbours**

We work not just for our own dream, but for the dreams of others too.

This starts local. We work closely with community groups, arts institutions and businesses in our area, making decisions that are mindful of our and the whole of our community's needs. We partner with local businesses and organisations particularly supporting those who find themselves sleeping on our streets. When we say we want to be a good neighbour, we mean it.

But it doesn't stop there. We run <https://frontlinenetwork.org.uk/> which supports small charities preventing homelessness throughout the UK. We care for carers, providing training and mental health support to those who put themselves on the front line for others.

We have a community-led group which builds relationships and shares resources with small charities and organisations around the world. Part of the money our visitors spend in our café, or donate to our church, supports survivors of human rights violations, assists HIV prevention in South Africa, and provides talking textbooks for school children experiencing sight-loss in Ethiopia.

### **Being With our Team**

Our values aren't just words. They live and breathe in the volunteers, staff and congregation members that make each part of St Martin's come alive.

We pay our staff team the London Living Wage <https://www.livingwage.org.uk/> and we listen to all our teams about how to support them with their mental health and wellbeing.

We do make mistakes, but we seek always to learn from them.

St Martin's welcomes and celebrates people from a wide variety of backgrounds, beliefs and perspectives to help us achieve our vision and values. With a vision this big, we can't do it alone.

### **Being With God**

At the heart of St Martin's is a community of faith. Many people say they like the ideas of Jesus, but find churches more complicated. We try to be a church that stays close to Jesus. Our values are rooted in the conviction that Jesus is God being with us. We are proud that people of different faiths generously help us realise our values across our organisation.

Our convictions about Being With are derived from the way Jesus spent the majority of his time on earth – just being with humanity in a town called Nazareth. 80 members of our community has taken this idea even further, and makes an annual commitment to focus on faith together. We call this the Nazareth Community. You can spot them, because they wear small crosses made from wood salvaged from the rafts that carry refugees across the Mediterranean. <https://www.stmartin-in-the-fields.org/congregational-life/the-nazareth-community/>

Our HeartEdge network brings together churches from all over the world that share our values to exchange best practice and build friendships. You can find out more about this here <https://www.heartedge.org>

We value making our church community as accessible as possible. Our worship and community life are available both in our building and online, and we are joined by people on every continent of the world. We have services in English, Cantonese and Mandarin.

We have a Welcome Course: if you'd like to know more email [Sian.Conway@smitf.org](mailto:Sian.Conway@smitf.org) We have even written our own course for people looking to understand faith like ours for the first time. It's called the Being With course. If you'd like to know more, email us at [BeingWith@smitf.org](mailto:BeingWith@smitf.org)