

CASE Press Release

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Nearly forty people from across the city have been commissioned to run an outreach initiative in one of the busiest parts of central Birmingham.

The Seekers' Centre at St Michael's Church in Moor Street has been open two years and aims to provide a warm welcome, hospitality and information about Christian spirituality and the Catholic faith, to a wide variety of people. It is based close to student buildings and one of the busiest bus stops in England, and as such, is a popular 'pop-in' venue for all ages including shoppers and visitors to the city.

On Tuesday 22nd April, Most Rev Vincent Nichols officiated at a Mass at the church to commission new Centre volunteers and re-commission the existing ones who've been running the facility during the past year. He said: **"This mission has at its core a loving heart. Each of you is able to share the reality of God's love and forgiveness with those that visit, here drawing from your own inner goodness and your own experience of need. You all know what it means at times, to feel lonely and in need, and this enables you to reach out to others. Through your prayers and actions you become loving pathways for the Spirit of God. Never loose the loving heart that you've created here."**

The volunteers are present at the church weekday afternoons and their presence means that anyone who'd like to can pop in. The hope is that visitors can find what they need, be that a quiet place to pray, a listening ear or someone to talk to about their lives and faith.

Sr Mary Joseph is the coordinator and said: **"One day a group of volunteers found a young man crying in front of the church. They went up to speak with him and he shared that he was in state of despair because he'd been a child soldier in an African country and was forced to do some terrible things; he didn't know if God would forgive him. The volunteers were able to listen, comfort and pray with him. He left feeling accepted and hope-filled and has since visited the church repeatedly. It's such a joy and privilege to be present to people in this way."**

Some of the volunteers are of Polish origin and are able to provide invaluable pastoral support to Poles who have recently entered the country. However, the main focus of the initiative is to provide people with a spiritual haven where they can sit and be.

The mission is resourced, and the volunteers are trained, by the Catholic Agency to Support Evangelisation (CASE); see www.casesources.org.uk If you're interested in becoming a volunteer or would like to find out more about what's offered at St Michael's please tel: 0121 643 0940. For general information about the Catholic faith please contact the Catholic Enquiry Office on tel. 020 8458 3316 or see: www.life4seekers.co.uk

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For Editors

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