

## **GOOD WILL AND PEACE TO ALL MEN AT CHRISTMAS**

In October 2020, the UK Government Home Office, without consulting Pembrokeshire County Council or the local community, introduced a group of up to 234 refugees and asylum seekers into an Army Training Camp at Penally, near Tenby. The group are all men aged between 17 and 35 years and are from Iran and Iraq. As soon as the Home Office's decision became known there was protesting within the local community. Reports say the conditions within the camp are unfit for those who are being temporarily housed there for up to a period of 12 months, according to the Home Office. Protests are common outside the camp with supporters of both sides, those who support the group and those who do not want the men here.



Many in the local community have been very charitable towards the men. As Autumn began to set in, an appeal was made to local community and faith leaders for donations of warm clothing and footwear. The response to this appeal was incredibly generous. People from the Catholic Parish of Tenby donated a sizeable amount, all individually sized, bagged, and labelled.

As Christmas approached a further appeal was made for individual Christmas gifts for the men up to the value of £5 each. Items such as sweet treats, games, toiletries were donated, and more clothing items were generously given. In addition to the donations received from all the local churches, community people and businesses, the appeal was responded to from outside the area, with a substantial donation by a generous benefactor from the Archdiocese of Cardiff, and a donation from North Yorkshire. Money was also donated, and this will be used to purchase Tablets for the men to loan and access the internet.

Finally, a large donation of new clothing was delivered to Holyrood and St Teilo's Parish Hall



from a major UK clothing retailer in response to a request from our friend in Cardiff.

Migrant Help continues to coordinate offers of help and support which has been overwhelming. English language tuition is being provided by groups including the Oasis Centre. Victim Support provides support to victims of hate crimes, while other groups are providing support where needed. The faith and spiritual needs of the group are being provided by the local inter-faith community to ensure religious observances are available.

A tremendous sense of gratitude has been expressed to everyone who contributing to improving in some small way the lives of the men with the camp at Penally.

May God be gracious and bless you.