



MEMBRE DE LA SOCIETE  
DE SAINTE-VINCENT DE PAUL



SOCIETY OF ST VINCENT DE PAUL

# News in Brief

November 2017 | Issue 17

Welcome to our latest e-news, which is filled with stories from around the country from hard-working volunteers and staff who are helping people in a practical way every-day. If you have a story you would like us to share, please email it to us at: [national@svdp.org.nz](mailto:national@svdp.org.nz)

## Gavin James Kennedy

**19 March 1950 – 15 November 2017**

Gavin Kennedy was an ordinary man like the majority of human kind. He achieved considerable success in the financial section of society.

One day when our National Office was canvassing for a National Treasurer, for some unknown reason, Gavin offered his services. He had no prior involvement with the Society of St Vincent de Paul but he decided to volunteer for a charitable organization like ours.

For 7 years Gavin performed that unenviable role with competence, reliability and patience and those of us who had dealings with Gavin will remember a man of kindness and gentleness who always had the best interests of the Society at heart.

May he now enjoy his well deserved rest in the Kingdom of God.

*Submitted by Frank Heffernan*



## Hearing Aids for the Elderly

The Vincentian Foundation for the Elderly was formed by the Society in 1976 as a special work. In recent years the Foundation has provided funding assistance for hearing aids for over 65s with a Community Services Card.

In the year to 31 May 2017 hearing aid grants were given to 31 people for a total cost of \$15,239 (approximately \$500 per grant).

Currently the Foundation only has funds available to cover two more years of grants and is seeking donations so it can continue to serve the needs of the elderly.

### DONATIONS WELCOME

Please forward any donations to the Foundation's bank account 02-0528-0234390-00 or contact The Vincentian Foundation for the Elderly, PO Box 1937, Wellington 6140



# 150 years of generosity, service and compassion



When Pope Francis described the kind of church he would like to see, he could have been talking about the vision that inspired the Society of St Vincent de Paul. “I prefer a church which is bruised, hurting and dirty,” said Pope Francis, “because it has been out on the streets, rather than a church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security.”

The Society of St Vincent de Paul was founded in Paris in 1833, a time of great poverty and social unrest in France. In the aftermath of the French Revolution, large slum areas had formed in Paris and thousands of people were homeless and without work. Fatal diseases and starvation were commonplace. At the same time religion was in decline and atheism on the increase. The church of the day was under attack for its preference for rhetoric over action.

This was the context in which a meeting took place in Paris on 13 April 1833, attended by six students determined to live out their Christian faith. The meeting took place in the office of 39 year-old Emmanuel Bailly, publisher of The Catholic Tribune, who chaired the meeting. The group chose St Vincent de Paul, the renowned champion of the poor, as the patron of their new Society.

The students agreed that the basic work of their “Conference of Charity” (later renamed the Society of St Vincent de Paul) would be home visits to poor families. The six students were Paul Lamache, Felix Clave, Auguste Le Taillandier, Jules Devaux, Francois Lallier and Frederic Ozanam. Frederic Ozanam is acknowledged as the leader of the group and the principal founder of the St Vincent de Paul Society. He was just 20 years of age at this time.

Enthusiasm for the new Society spread rapidly. Thirty-four Conferences of Charity were soon established in Paris and from there the movement spread to the French provinces, including Lyon where the Society of Mary was founded.

In the 1840s the Society experienced spectacular growth. By 1843, there were 34 Conferences in Paris alone. It spread to Rome in 1842 and to England and Ireland in 1844, followed by foundations in Germany, Holland, Greece, the United States and Mexico in 1846, then Switzerland and Canada in 1847, Austria and Spain in 1850, and Australia in 1854.

## Frederic Ozanam, Principal Founder

Antoine-Frédéric Ozanam (1813 -1853) was a French literary scholar, lawyer, journalist and social justice advocate. As a young man he dedicated himself to improving social conditions for the poor and disadvantaged, and restoring the Catholic faith in France.

He was born in Milan, at that time a French city. In 1815 his family moved to Lyons where Frederic spent his youth. While studying at the Sorbonne in Paris, he and his fellow Catholic students were challenged to “show us your works” that would prove the truth of their faith. Their response was to establish the Conference of Charity, a group prepared to act on behalf of the needy, the sick and the lonely.

In 1841 he married Amelie Soulacroix, a kindred spirit, and they had one daughter. He died in 1853 at the early age of 40 after a long illness. His short and prophetic life was a powerful witness to an authentic Christian life. He was beatified by Pope John Paul II in the Cathedral of Notre Dame de Paris in 1997.

“Yours must be a work of love, of kindness,” he once wrote. “You must give your time, your talents, yourselves. The poor person is a unique person of God’s fashioning with an inalienable right to respect. You must not be content with tiding the poor over the poverty crisis. You must study their condition and the injustices which brought about such poverty, with the aim of a long-term improvement.”



“The poor person is a unique person of God’s fashioning with an inalienable right to respect.” - Frederic Ozanam



### 150th Anniversary

2017 marks the 150th anniversary of the beginning of the Society of St Vincent de Paul in New Zealand. It was first established in Christchurch in 1867 by Fr Jean-Baptiste Chataigner SM, the first parish priest of the city and one of the pioneering French Marists in New Zealand. There were 22 members at the first meeting with seven ladies assisting.

A Conference was established at Sacred Heart parish in Wellington in 1876, by Fr Jean-Baptiste Petitjean SM and a dynamic Scotsman by the name of Charles O'Neill who was its first President. Charles O'Neill, engineer and charity worker, is sometimes called the founder of the Society in New Zealand and Australia; he certainly played a large part in its development.

The Society flourished in New Zealand with the steady growth of Conferences around the country. In 1932 The Society formed its own Superior Council of New Zealand, with headquarters in Wellington. From 1895 until 1931, New Zealand Conferences and Councils had been affiliated to the Superior Council of Australasia.

The story of the Society in New Zealand over the last 150 years is a story of service, generosity and compassion, offered without fanfare or fuss. Today the Society in New Zealand has 1,600 members and 135 Conferences. It also has around 2,000 “Young Vinnies” or youth members who bring their great faith and vitality to the Society. Worldwide it is the largest lay organisation in the Church, with 50,000 Conferences and around 800,000 members.

The 150th Anniversary of the Society of St Vincent de Paul in New Zealand was celebrated on the weekend of 13-15 October, 2017 in Christchurch. There have also been plenty of local celebrations hosted by the Society around New Zealand to mark this special occasion.



Photo above left to right - Terry Comber National President, Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Martin Krebs, Mike Daly Christchurch Area President.



Photos from many of the celebrations hosted by the Society around New Zealand to mark the 150 year Anniversary.



# World Day of the Poor: November 19, 2017

On June 13, Pope Francis officially launched the “World Day of the Poor” which will take place November 19, 2017 and every year thereafter on the 33rd Sunday of Ordinary time.

By John Freund ([www.famvin.org](http://www.famvin.org))

Are you up to the radical challenge of Pope Francis? Love not with words but deeds!

If you are you can be part of a systemic change that can change the world!

Pope Francis borrows words from the First Epistle of John as the title for his message for the First World Day of the Poor, 2017. “Let us love, not with words but with deeds.” It may not be a new challenge. But it certainly is still as radical as when St. John issued the challenge in his First Epistle.

Vincent had his own way of saying it. “Let us love God, brothers, let us love God, but let it be with the strength of our arms and the sweat of our brows” We have many contemporary ways of saying it. Among them, “Put your money where your mouth is!”

While it may not be a new challenge it is still quite radical. At least if we understand it as Pope Francis does.

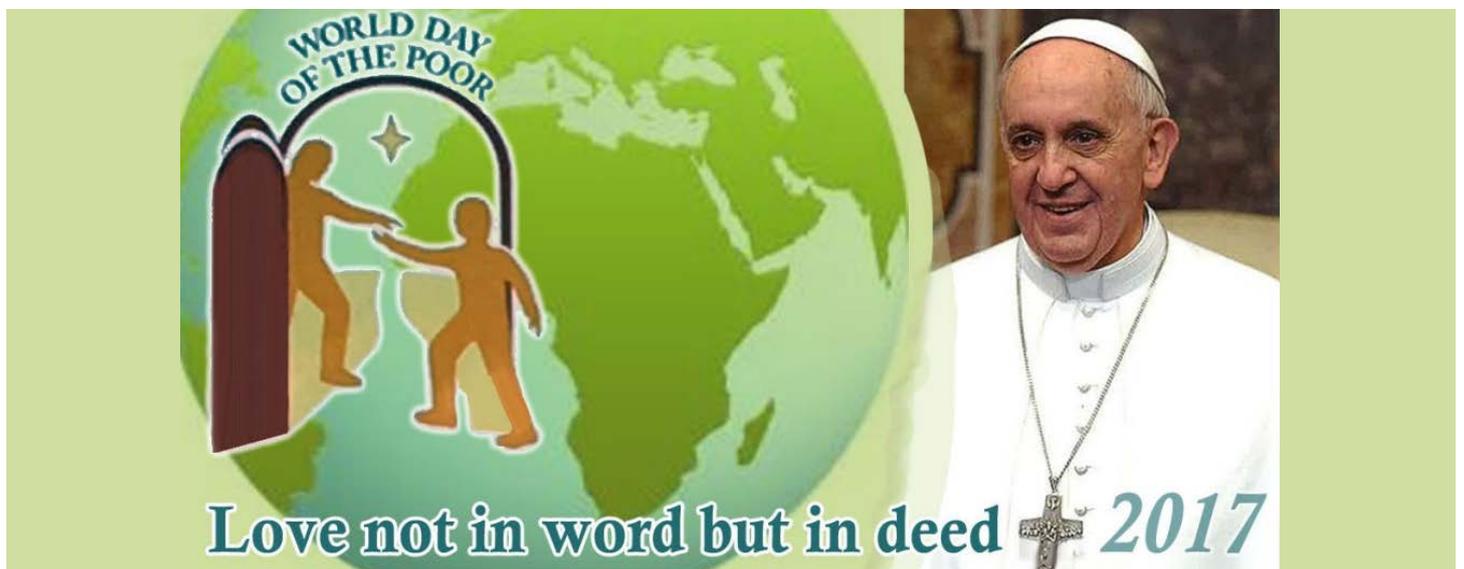
## Getting specific

He makes the challenge very specific.

“It is my wish that, in the week preceding the World Day of the Poor, which falls this year on 19 November, the Thirty-third Sunday of Ordinary Time, Christian communities will make every effort to create moments of encounter and friendship, solidarity and concrete assistance.”

Invisible People, a blog devoted to telling the stories of the homeless, gets even more specific about how we can interact.

- Make eye contact. It's hard to be homeless and being ignored can be painful. Make eye contact and greet the person with a hello or good morning.
- If you feel like giving money then give. It's okay. Like Pope Francis said, “it's okay to give homeless people money and we should not worry about doing so.”
- Keep in mind your safety must come first. Do not open your purse or take out your wallet if you feel it may be dangerous.
- If you don't feel like giving money, simply say “sorry.” It's never a good practice to lie and say you don't have anything.
- If you're not the type to give money than an alternative is to carry a few pairs of socks to hand out. I walk around with Hanes socks in my backpack. When someone asks me for money, I normally hand each person two pairs of new socks. It's a great way to start a conversation and get to know the individual. Carry socks in your purse, briefcase or glove box. Other items to give include gift cards or bus tokens, but I find socks are needed and easy to carry.
- There are occasions when a homeless person is overly aggressive, has severe mental health issues or is intoxicated. If you don't feel safe, don't engage with the person. However, remember to have compassion as to why they may act that way.
- Last but far from least is to simply listen. Homelessness is horrible, and people experiencing homelessness are often in crisis. They may have a simple need that you can help with. You just have to start a conversation and listen.



## *Hawera St Vincent de Paul Shop celebrates 50 years of service in the Community.*

In 1967, the St Joseph's Conference made a major decision to open an Opportunity shop in Hawera. It was a new venture, a steep learning curve for those involved at the time, but it proved the begin-nings of serving the community through providing affordable clothing.

In the Society News of Autumn 1996 an account is given which is quoted ' A year later (1967) a shop was established on High Street, Hawera, and over the years business has been conducted from four different premises'.

The last premises were small, lacking storage facilities and was on the shady side of the street.

In 1995 the opportunity arose to purchase a larger shop on the sunny side of the street. The building, formerly a paint shop, was only 18 years old with kitchen, toilet facilities and a work room at the rear of the shop. Structurally it was very sound with concrete block construction and had both good floor coverings and lighting.

Mr Pat O'Dowd was the president at the time, and he, along with Conference members considered it a very viable option to purchase the building. Not only was it on the sunny side of the street, but the premises were larger.

A generous bequest from Miss Mary Fitzgerald, two other substantial donations plus raising a loan from the National Council made it possible. It was a courageous move. The subsequent years have proved that it was an excellent decision.

The new premises had a dedication and blessing ceremony at the Shop on 31 March 1996. In the re-port of the occasion the new Shop Manager appointed was Mrs Mary Doyle. Mary continued in that role and it only about six years ago that she relinquished that role. Barbara Fowler shared the Manager's role with Mary and in 2010 Berna Sutton joined them. At the AGM this year both Barbara & Berna retired as Shop Managers. Their role has been taken up by Barbara Hurcomb and Ruth Rangiwahia.

Our shop has approximately 40+ volunteers. Some work whole days and others just do either a morn-ing or an afternoon. We are proud of the fact that all our work is achieved by volunteers and we have no paid staff.

The people who work in the shop have designated days and a great spirit builds between them. There is pride in the presentation of the shop, in the achieving of tasks, but always there is fun and enjoy-ment. Team work is very much to the fore.

The success of the shop is always dependant on good will - the generosity of people who donate goods for sale and the people in the local community and beyond, who shop with us.

It is hoped that we continue to be welcoming to people, always be prepared to spend time with them and be a

listening ear where necessary. For some of our people, the shop is simply a destination in itself where they know people will greet them and talk with them.

Over the years there has been significant income from our Shop. We are always thankful, that the money raised through the shop does not accumulate excessively, but is put to practical use.

We have contributed generously to any appeals made by National realising that the need must be great for an appeal to be made to Conferences across the country. Our most recent response has been to the appeal for improved sanitary arrangements in Sri Lanka.

We are always delighted when we can help in our local community, and where practicable, maintain that person to person contact. A variety of assistance has been given from supplying clothing,

furniture, firewood, food, petrol vouchers, appliances, paying bills, assisting with funeral costs, as-sisting our local school, providing educational grants. Where we have members involved with Food Bank and Trinity Home and Hospital we also assist them when special needs arise. Trinity has cared for former and present members of our Conference.

During the week of celebration. the shop was decorated with pennants and balloons, sweets were giv-en to children and cake to adults. All this contributed to the festive spirit acknowledging 50 years.

A great groundwork was established by those who established our Opportunity Shop 50 years ago. The present volunteers are thankful that they are part of continuing that spirit of service and helping others. We give thanks for those 50 years.



*Op Shop volunteers Ruth Rangiwahia, Barbara Fowler, and Barbara Hurcomb are very happy to be part of the half-century celebrations.*

## The New Zealand History of the Society of St Vincent de Paul

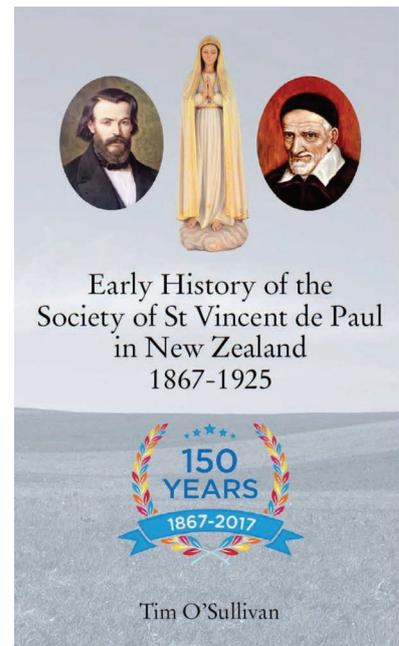
The recent 150th Anniversary celebrations of the Society in Christchurch (14th and 15th October 2017) saw the launch of a book recording the history of the Society in New Zealand from its earliest days in 1867.

Entitled "The early history of the Society of St Vincent de Paul in New Zealand, 1867-1925" the book describes the development of the Society from its first Conference in Christchurch.

This is not only about the Society but is a window into the seldom described lives of the poorer citizens of New Zealand.

It is full of interesting facts about the Society of St Vincent de Paul and life for the poorer citizens of colonial New Zealand who the Society set out to help.

Combining social history with the story of the development of lay Vincentian charity, this book breaks new ground for the history of the Catholic Church in our country.



### Available from:

#### The Society of St Vincent de Paul

265 Stanmore Road,  
Richmond, Christchurch 8013  
Email: penny@svdpchch.co.nz  
Phone: 03 389 7484

### Publication details:

#### Early History of the Society of St Vincent de Paul in New Zealand 1867-1925. By Tim O'Sullivan.

Recommended retail price: \$30.00  
ISBN: 978-0-473-40997-5  
Published: October 2017. 184 pages.  
Includes illustrations, bibliography, footnotes and index.

## Successful Festival Meeting

A successful Festival Meeting for Western Bay of Plenty (WBOP) Vincentians was held on Sunday 17 September 2017 in the Saint Mary's Church, Tauranga Meeting Area after the 10.30 am Mass.

Over fifty Vincentians from Waihi to Te Puke gathered to celebrate two events. Firstly the completion of another year's Vincentian work in WBOP and secondly to recognise 150 Years of the Society's being in New Zealand.

The meeting started with lunch and the opportunity for those present to catch up with Vincentians from around Western Bay and share reminiscences and stories of days past. The meeting proper started with the Opening Prayer and a reflection on quotes from Saint Vincent De Paul. As he was at a Festival Meeting in Hawkes Bay, a letter from the National President, Terry Comber, was read to the meeting. In his letter Terry emphasised the importance of the Spiritual dimension in being a Vincentian. The WBOP Area President's Annual Report and the Annual Statements of Accounts were adopted by the meeting. Each Conference President and Project Coordinator gave brief presentations on the operations of their Conferences and Projects over the past twelve months.

The second part of the meeting was spent commemorating the Society's 150 years in New Zealand. For the occasion blue

and white decorations had been placed in the meeting room and an overhead projector showed slides of past events in WBOP. A timeline of the Society in New Zealand was placed down one wall. Special guests were Sister Gabrielle (Cluny Sisters) and Theo Vialli. Sister was spiritual advisor to a Conference for many years and Theo is a veteran Vincentian. Three Vincentians, Tony Fuller, Peter McConnichie (Tauranga) and John Cavanagh (Te Puke) who between them had devoted over 100 years to serving the Society in WBOP were recognised during the meeting. The three had all served as Conference Presidents over the years and each was presented with a Vincentian Cross and Certificate to recognise their outstanding contributions to the Society. Each Conference and Project prepared a brief history covering from their origins to the present day and copies of this booklet were distributed to those in attendance.



*John Cavanagh (on left)  
Maree Lewis (Te Puke  
Conference President)  
Tony Rogers (Area  
President)*



## Wellington op shop helping divert landfill waste with first-of-its-kind sewing initiative

A Wellington op shop is taking the classic “reduce, reuse and recycle” message one step further in an effort to bring its textile waste down to zero.

Caroline O’Reilly, the new textile recycling coordinator at St Vincent de Paul in Kilbirnie, is helping reduce the amount of waste the store sends to landfill by repurposing unsaleable clothing and textiles.

“We currently spend \$1500 per month on dump costs, which equates to close to 30 bales of textiles.”

Caroline O’Reilly is the new textile recycling coordinator and sewing tutor at St Vinnies ReSew, a new initiative designed to help reduce the amount of textile waste going to landfill.

O’Reilly is heading up Vinnies Re Sew, a space above the op shop where she is helping teach sewing skills to those who want to upskill while doing their part for the environment.

“A lot of the people we get coming through, especially the young ones, haven’t learnt to sew at school and they are really eager to learn how to repair their own clothes, O’Reilly says.

Textiles account for 4 per cent of all waste sent to New Zealand landfills according to Ministry for the Environment figures.

“They’re looking at how the environment is being killed by fast fashion and they want to help stop that.”

The Re Sew initiative is the first of its kind in New Zealand with all material coming from clothing and textile donations that can’t be sold in the St Vincent de Paul op shops throughout Wellington.

“We’re running it like a proper business so things come in, they’re sorted and washed, then we pick projects and get to work repurposing the textiles.

Anyone with an interest in sewing and sustainability are encouraged to get involved with the ReSew scheme.

“What’s really exciting is that we don’t know what will come in and we don’t know what will come out,” O’Reilly says.

The idea, which has been several months in the planning, was brought to fruition, thanks in part to a grant from Wellington City Council’s Waste Minimisation Seed Fund.

When rubbish goes into a New Zealand landfill, a levy of \$10 per tonne is collected by the Ministry for the Environment. A portion of the money is then allocated to the council from the waste levy, based on population and must be spent on promoting or achieving waste minimisation.

The space, above the St Vincent de Paul op shop in Kilbirnie, is thought to be the first of its kind in New Zealand.

While O’Reilly says it’s a thrill to be able to be able to reduce

the op shop’s waste stream, it’s the community hub aspect of ReSew that is proving to be most exciting.

“It’s a place where ideas, crafts and skills can be shared across the generations and cultures that live in our diverse community.”

The initiative will also be used to broaden St Vincent de Paul’s work experience program for participants from welfare clients, new immigrants, refugees and bridging programs.

With that, the ultimate goal is to build participants confidence and skill sets so that they can move into paid work or further education.

Already, just a few weeks into the scheme, several groups have come on board to use the space or benefit from its output including Boomerang Bags, the Sustainability Trust, The Formary, Craft Volunteer NZ and the Newtown Community Centre.

It’s just the start though says O’Reilly, with the call still out for volunteers of all ages and experience welcome to join in on the fun while doing their bit for the planet.



## None of us can escape suffering

Submitted by Kathy Egan, St Marys Taradale.

In a certain village a young boy fell ill and died. His mother was inconsolable. Many of her friends tried to comfort her, but she said nothing would ease her grief unless her son was brought back to life.

She went to the doctor but he shook his head and said it was impossible. The wise woman with her herbs and spells said it was beyond her power, and so did everyone else the mother approached. Eventually she came to the hut of an old monk living as a hermit deep in the forest and she asked him if he could restore her son to life.

"Certainly," said the monk.

"What do I have to do?" the woman cried, delighted that at last someone was able to help her.

"Go back to your village," the monk said, "and bring me a cup of milk from a house that has never known suffering, and I will restore your son to life."

The woman set off thinking of all her happy neighbours. But as she went from hut to hut even the liveliest families had to tell her that pain, suffering and death had at some time visited them, and though they were joyful now, it had not always been so.

The woman went back to the monk with an empty cup.

"Could you not find one house without suffering to give you a cup of milk?" he asked.

"No," she answered. "Now I see that there is no life without suffering and no suffering that cannot be overcome."

---

The promise of the Kingdom is not that we shall escape the hard things but that we shall be given grace to face them, to enter into them and to come through them. The promise is not that we shall not be afraid it is that we need not fear.

*From: Living with Contradiction by Esther deWaal*



## Raindrops

I was eager for raindrops  
when I was young.  
I would taste them  
on my tongue,  
and stomp in puddles,  
and umbrellas  
were fun.

I hid from raindrops  
when I was a teen.  
I hunched my shoulders,  
sheltered beside shop windows  
and flinched when the rain  
touched my skin.

I wrapped my young children  
in hats and coats  
and scarves and mittens,  
and the rain was coughs  
and temperatures and doctor visits,  
and fussy children fretting at windows  
while backyards turned to bogs.

In my thirties I waded through water  
up to my knees while neighbours  
stood on doorsteps  
shouting encouragement,  
and the Hutt river burst its banks  
in a freak weather event.

And now I am in my fifties  
and the raindrops all have teeth  
and bite at the weakened land  
and flood the streets  
and even the poor  
have bottled water  
spare bread and peanut butter.

For every raindrop is a flood and flood is loss,  
And water has become our albatross.

---

*By Kate Yanakis - Newtown Park Apartments*

## News in Brief

### Society of St Vincent de Paul in New Zealand

PO Box 10-815, The Terrace, Wellington 6143 (Freepost 992)

Level 1, 35 Victoria Street, Wellington 6011

Email: [national@svdp.org.nz](mailto:national@svdp.org.nz) | [www.svdp.org.nz](http://www.svdp.org.nz)

Phone: 04 499 5070 | Fax: 04 499 4563

### We'd Love to Read your Stories:

If you have any news items that you would like us to put in our next 'News in Brief' e-newsletter, please send us a short article and a photo (if you have one) to Anne-Marie McCarten, email: [national@svdp.org.nz](mailto:national@svdp.org.nz)

## Rest in Peace

### Conal Cairns

Passed away on October 19th, 2017  
in Blenheim aged 76 years.