

# News in Brief

E-news October 2019 | Issue 23

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)



MEMBRE DE LA SOCIETE  
DE SAINT-VINCENT DE PAUL



## Rest in peace – Denis Garcia

**Denis Garcia former editor of the Society News sadly passed away on 26 August 2019. A great loss to the Society - a man with a wealth of knowledge who faithfully served for so many years at Our Lady Help of Christians Conference, Fitzroy, New Plymouth.**

Faith is the keystone that has kept the marriage of former Taranaki Daily News editor Denis Garcia and his wife Bernadette going for 66 years.

The couple, who celebrated their wedding anniversary on April 11, has seven children and are now blessed with 24 grandchildren and 29 great-grandchildren.



*Above: Celebrating their parents' (seated) 65th wedding anniversary at New Plymouth were, from left, John, Annette, Martin, Geraldine, Maree and Anthony.*

“Obviously, there are many challenges when you are raising a big family. When you’ve got a faith like ours, that gives you added strength in all sorts of situations,” said Mr Garcia.

Mr Garcia stressed communication is important in any relationship.

“The big thing is to listen to each other’s views. It might be on big matters relating to the raising of your children or just a simple

matter of where you are going to dinner that night. Don’t be dogmatic about it. Be receptive to your partner’s viewpoint, even if you don’t agree. You’ll win sometimes,” he said.

Although there was a time or two, he admitted, when he failed at it.

“There was the occasion when I did not advise her of an assignment,” he recalled. “Parachuting was just becoming a popular sport and a gathering was to be held at New Plymouth. I was selected to do a jump which was not entirely successful and when I arrived home, half-carried by two photographers, Bernadette was not impressed.”

Mr Garcia’s journalistic career sometimes took him abroad.

“I was seconded to the New Zealand Press Association on two occasions to cover in 1959 the tour of the South Pacific in the cruiser HMNZS Royalist by the Governor-General Lord Cobham, and in 1964 to report on the arrival in Cyprus of the New Zealand police unit sent there as part of the United Nations peacekeeping force,” he said.

“I owe a great debt of gratitude to Bernadette for looking after seven young children.”

While Mrs Garcia had the full-time job of looking after the kids, Mr Garcia “spent most of my days off working as a casual on the waterfront at New Plymouth, on the chain at the Waitara freezing works or in the local Totalisator Agency Board branch”.

“Supporting a family of seven children was no easy task in those days,” he noted. “When they were all old enough, Bernadette returned to work as a computerised typesetter at the newspaper.”

Mr and Mrs Garcia met in Dargaville where he worked on the local newspaper and she at a legal office.

“She was an accomplished Highland dancer, a representative netball player and a piper in the Northern Wairoa Highland Pipe Band. Her friends arranged for us to attend a ball together as a blind date and that was that,” he said.

They met frequently after that. In their many discussions, she so impressed him with the depth of her faith that he decided to convert from being an Anglican to Catholicism.

They were married in Sacred Heart Church, Dargaville, in 1953, both aged 21.



Fifty years ago as Bernadette and Denis’ seventh child, Denise (now deceased) began school at St John Bosco’s, with, from left, Martin (Francis Douglas Memorial College), Annette (Sacred Heart Girls’ College), John (Francis Douglas), Maree (Sacred Heart), Geraldine and Anthony (both St John Bosco’s).

Mr Garcia said his most prized possession is a photo he took of his children 50 years ago, when his youngest child Denise started school.

“They were lined up from youngest to oldest, two attending Francis Douglas Memorial College, two at Sacred Heart Girls’ College and three at St John Bosco’s primary school,” he said.

Sadly, Denise passed away at age 26 in a motor vehicle accident in the United Kingdom.

The couple, who received Benemerenti medals from Pope Francis in 2014, had been joint sacristans at Our Lady Help of Christians church in New Plymouth for about 20 years.

On her retirement, Mrs Garcia volunteered with St Vincent de Paul Opportunity Shop for 15 years.

Mr Garcia was also a member of the St Vincent de Paul Society for 30 years, occupying various roles such as national newsletter editor as well as Taranaki area treasurer, and Our Lady Help of Christians Conference secretary.

## Harmony in the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul

By Renato Lima de Oliveira, 16th General President of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul, in all parts of the world, has the face of its local presidents. If the president is democratic, open to dialogue and conciliatory, so will the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. If the leader is closed, stern and centralizing, so will our beloved Society. Therefore, we must have the appropriate profile of president for our Councils and Conferences; otherwise, the harmony that governs our organization will end.

A good Council or Conference President is one who is truly democratic, exercising three great virtues: knowing how to listen, how to listen and how to listen. If you are open to dialogue and criticism, there will be unity in your management and you will be able to implement projects and initiatives, winning the support of all. Detachment to personal opinion is one of the qualities of the good Vincentian. However, if the leader makes decisions without listening to the bases, he is doomed to failure. An authoritarian president kills the hopes and expectations of the Vincentians.

A good SSVP president is the one who delegates tasks and assignments and, with charity and responsibility, gets results. If he or she is centralizer, it will not do too much. In addition, we are a work team that, in the Conference or in the Councils, adds up our individual talents and, thus, in the name of the poor, seeks to transform reality. We are like a “soccer team,” in which all players are important.

A good SSVP president is the one who gives the example, faithfully fulfilling the Rule without making concessions or seeking “quick solutions,”<sup>[1]</sup> showing everyone that our secular existence happens precisely because of the hierarchy of love and regulation that we keeps united and strong.

The leader must be transparent, not only with financial and

patrimonial matters, but also in his actions and words. He must be frank, kind, conciliatory.

A good leader is one who does not attend to gossip and respects each member, especially by providing support in the most difficult moments of their lives. A vocational leader is one who avoids distractions and noises in communication and, if they occur, is always willing to undo the knots and contribute to the growth of the Vincentian group.

The SSVP leader is one whose documents are open, they are public. There are no confidential or reserved documents in our beloved Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. I’m surprised to hear this kind of justification in the mouth of some Council presidents. If something is confidential it is because, at a minimum, it is problematic. We have to deal with our problems with balance and with reasons, without letting the heart impede a truly independent analysis.

If the leaders of our Conferences or Councils act like this, I am sure that harmony will reign within the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. We have to rescue the spirit of concord between us. The beautiful work done in favour of assisted families runs the risk of being stained by unprepared leaders contaminated by the vanity virus. Let us pray a lot in the presidential elections that take place, so that God will give us responsible, modern leaders and in line with the thought of Ozanam.

[1] *Jeitinhos*, in the original. This typical expression of Brazil indicates an informal way of reacting based on improvisation in unexpected, difficult or complex situations, not based on rules, nor on procedures or rules stipulated previously [translator’s note].



# From the Archives

In 1944 the Prime Minister, Peter Fraser approached Archbishop O'Shea requesting help from the Catholic Church to resettle refugee children from Poland.

Eight hundred Polish children accompanied by a priest, two Ursuline sisters and a certain number of adults (some relatives, teachers, helpers and domestic workers) landed at Wellington. They came at the invitation of the New Zealand government and were given the right to stay in New Zealand until the day when, hostilities over, they could, as it was hoped, return to their newly-liberated country. The authorities assigned a special camp at Pahiatua to the new arrivals. For three years they enjoyed complete autonomy, with a secondary and primary school of their own where everything, except English, was taught in Polish and they could observe their religious and national customs.

But as the hope of returning to a free Poland began to fade, they had to think of making a new life in the new country and adapting themselves to its ways. The camp was closed at the beginning of 1949 and children and adults were dispersed throughout the country with a large nucleus gathered at Wellington, the capital of New Zealand.

This was the beginning of the Society's work with refugee resettlement which continues to this day. In time the Society was to become the Church's main channel for receiving refugees, providing accommodation, finding jobs, obtaining financial assistance and family support.

#### Number of Councils and Conferences at that time:

- By 1946 there were four Particular (now Area) Councils in place – Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin. There were 80 Conferences and 62 Ladies Auxiliaries at that time.
- Between 1947-1955 Particular Councils were established in Hawkes Bay (1947), Hutt Valley (1954) Palmerston North (1955), Timaru (1960), Invercargill (1963, Hamilton and New Plymouth (1965).



Above: Prime Minister, Peter Frater, with refugee children from Poland.

ST MARY'S CONFERENCE NAPIER

## Thermals for kids

After being challenged by Our Lady of Lourdes Council at our Day of Reflection and Discussion with Fr Jeff, St Mary's Conference Taradale, with the shared financial support from the Area Council, researched, bought and coordinated sets of thermals for low decile early childhood centres in our city.

171 children were given a set each, all the children attending the four Centres, much to the joy of the children, parents and teachers.

This project gave such delight and satisfaction to the members.

The collation into sets with a ribbon and card saying "with love from St Vincent de Paul" was helped by our young Vinnies.

A huge task which will be increased and continued next winter.



VINNIES YOUTH CHRISTCHURCH

## Eco bags!



The amazing Young Vinnies group at St Patrick's School in Bryndwr have made eco bags. They did a fantastic job.

The next project is rest home visitation.

Great work Christchurch Vinnies!



WESTERN BAY AREA COUNCIL

## Mobile food van blessing

**On Sunday 4 August 2019 Fr Rico Enriquez blessed the new mobile food for the Western Bay Area Council. The old van which had served the project since it started was tired and needed replacement.**

The project has been operating in Tauranga for fourteen years and was the pilot for the implementation of mobile vans in New Zealand. The van visits various areas of the city six nights a week to provide meals for those seeking assistance. In the year to June 2019 about 8,000 contacts with the needy were made and nearly 2,300 hours were given by the Volunteers who operate the van and prepare meals.



## Celebrating all things Vincentian

By Paola Minehan, Young Vinnies coordinator

**Hawkes Bay regional Festival Mass at St Marys Church in Taradale saw us come together to celebrate all things Vincentian.**

Young Vinnies shared this day by making presentation boards with photos of projects from the year so far and a personal reflection on what they have personally experienced from being a part of young Vinnies.

Comments included such things as; "I've a personal sense of enjoyment from helping", "I feel like young Vinnies has really improved my personality. I also feel it has helped me in my faith", "Young Vinnies has taught me that small things can make someone's day."

*"I've gained so much over the past Terms, but what really stuck out was the overall fact I was able to make an elderly person smile from something so little. It was definitely worth my time and effort."*



## Festival meeting

**A very pleasant Festival Meeting was held at Saint Thomas More Church on Sunday 29 September 2019 hosted by the Mount Maunganui Conference on behalf of the Western Bay of Plenty Area Council.**

The day started with Mass at 9.30 am followed by a cup of tea with Parishioners, After that the Festival meeting started with a most interesting presentation by Father Fr Jaya Prakesh. Father Prakesh is assistant priest at Saint Thomas More.

Father spoke of his education in India having entered a Seminary when aged 15 and being ordained when he was 29. Father then went on to talk about the life of Saint Vincent De Paul and the work the Society does. Father then expanded on the personal attributes that Vincentians should exhibit in the way in which they go about helping people.

Father's presentation was very much enhanced by the skilful use of an electronic media. Following Father there was a presentation from the Te Puke Conference on the help that that very small Conference is able to provide to the needy in their area through partnering with other Christian groups in their town. Following the Festival Meeting the Annual General Meeting of the WBOP Society Area took place. Those present then shared lunch.



### UPPER HUTT CONFERENCE

## Popcorn Fundraiser

**Children of St Joseph's Upper Hutt Middle School chose a project for term 3 in which they learnt about the work of the St Vincent de Paul Society.**

They decided they would raise funds for the people who struggle to feed and care for their families in our parish and to do this by having a bit of fun as well as collecting money for the Upper Hutt Conference. They packed and sold popcorn. It was

a huge success and Anne Bowles was invited to receive a cheque for \$240.00 from the Principal Andrew Herrick and Middle School Syndicate Leader, Leyton Walker. The children greeted Anne with a song and listened as she told them about Blessed Frederic Ozanam.

It was a beautiful, joyful occasion to see the generosity being nurtured in our young children. Our thanks go to all involved.



# John's Pilgrimage

This account relates the sole pilgrimage of Ioane Perez over the past 25 years plus, praying for Worldwide Christian Unity. John, as he is known, is from the Tokelau Islands and a Parishioner of the Cathedral of The Holy Spirit in Palmerston North. His pilgrimage was completed at New Zealand's Anglican Cathedrals in 2019, here is that account.

John's inspiration for this final phase came after reading Cardinal John Dew's columns from Welcom in May and July 2017, deciding to dedicate his prayer for Christian Unity in New Zealand with a 4 week journey travelling by bus, plane and ferry, visiting eight New Zealand Anglican Cathedrals, staying for 3 - 4 days at each location and praying.

To succeed John required assistance, late in 2018 he asked this of the Society of St Vincent De Paul, Palmerston North, they were pleased to assist.

John was to pray three Rosaries, read the Bible and make personal prayer at each Cathedral. Departing Palmerston North on 8th February to Napier's Waiapu Cathedral of John the Evangelist, on 11th February to New Plymouth's The Cathedral Church of St Mary which was closed for seismic evaluation, instead praying at the adjacent Day Chapel and on 14th February to Hamilton's St Peters Cathedral. On 18th February to Auckland's Holy Trinity Cathedral, on 22nd February flying to Dunedin's St Paul's Cathedral, the 25th February to Christchurch's Transitional Cathedral, the 28th February to Nelson's Christ Church Cathedral. The last step on 4th March was Nelson to Picton, ferry to Wellington's Cathedral of St Paul when sadly John began feeling unwell and returned early to Palmerston North.

Back home John was not seen for days, Parishioners were asking where was he, eventually appearing and making a surprising declaration, he began fasting for 40 days on the first day of travel and was to finish the last few days in Porirua, all that time taking only water. Sadly the fasting and travelling caught up, John did not stay with his Porirua family, instead returning to Palmerston North to recuperate.

The good news is with the passage of time John has regained his health remembering with great hope his 25 plus years pilgrimage especially the last 4 weeks praying in New Zealand. John asks us not to forget the words of Pope Benedict XVI "It is Christ's desire for Christian Unity".

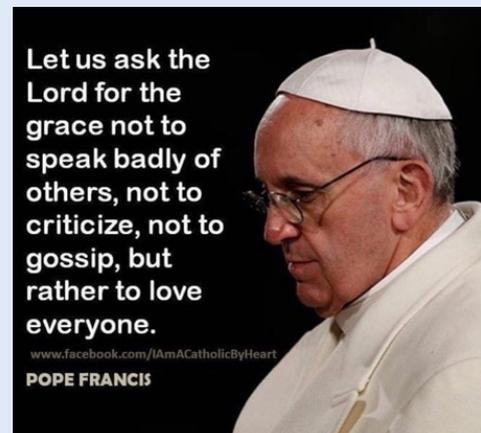


Above: Mike Keenan & John Perez

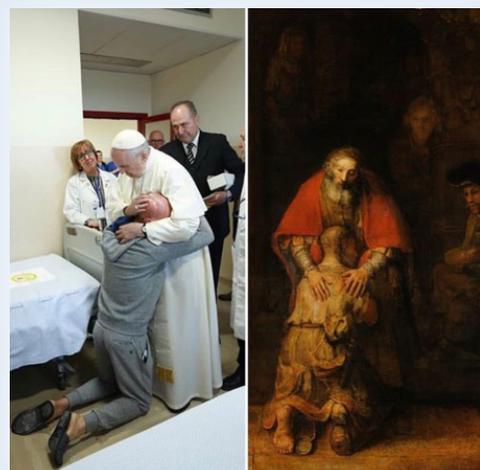
## WORDS OF WISDOM

"In the Apache language there is no word for 'guilt.' Our lives are like diamonds. When we are born we are pure and uncut. Each thing that happens to us in our lives teaches us how to reflect the light in the world; each experience gives us a new cut, a new facet in our diamond. How brilliantly do those diamonds sparkle whose facets are many, to whom life has given many cuts!"

**Fr Daniel J. O'Leary**  
quoting Bearwatcher, an  
Apache medicine man



## Compassion



## Pope Francis

Compassion (Rembrandt's Return of the Prodigal Son)

# Twinning Report

## TONGA



A request was received for 4 computers to strengthen the communication process between Tongatapu and 3 other outer islands Eua, Ha'apei and Vava'u. This need was recognised during Cyclone Gita when communication was difficult. It will also allow regular contact between the National Council of Tonga and these outlying Conferences identifying needs and assistance and also save on the cost of travel. The computers have been delivered.

The computer project completed earlier this year by the Hornby Conference had a value of around NZ\$35,000. This has resulted in many of the schools well equipped with computers. The Hornby Conference and its members need to be congratulated on the assistance they have given over several years.

In late September we received an offer of 44 desks from the Bio-engineering Institute of Auckland University. These were shipped in October to Nuku a'lofa where they will be well utilised in local colleges.

We have ongoing discussion with regards to priority projects that can be considered. Currently they are based around family education and health needs. The ongoing issues around housing is another challenge we need to visit.

## SAMOA

As with Tonga we have the same challenges associated with health, housing and education.

We are assessing project requests at present in the areas of health and family assistance.

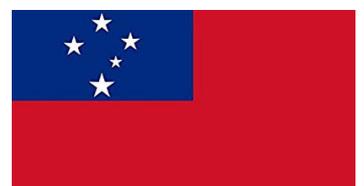
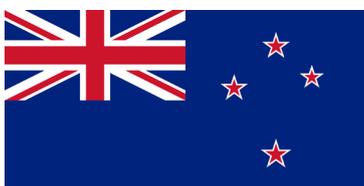
During October the Conference of Our Lady of Kapiti has organised a container of educational, household, medical and clothing to go to the Immaculate Conception Conference in Apia. What these members have achieved is truly wonderful and I know that Peter Bendinelli and his members will achieve so much with these goods. Another container is being organised from Christchurch with a donation of desks and school furniture from Lincoln University.



## SRI LANKA

The Bombing appeal resulted in \$54,077.00 being donated. A big thankyou from you all. An initial transfer of funds was done during August. The initial focus is the identification of and in many instances long-term support for orphans. Several families lost the primary income earner which has pushed many further into poverty. In many cases Grandparents are now raising the family members. The project is been managed by the Society's National President and the National Chaplain.

The village of Sevuwanthivu in the Chilaw Diocesan Council where we are funding a sanitation project is progressing. As they are only about 1.5 metres above sea level the design has to meet Sri Lankan regulations. The toilets are built on top of a raised platform which will allow the removal of the waste as required.



# Report on SVDPNZ Roadshows 2019



**Overview:** This is a summary statement of the evaluations and action plans from all members in Hawkes Bay, Wellington, Auckland, Thermal Lands, Nelson Marlborough, Christchurch, Manawatu/Whangarei/Taranaki, West Coast with only Southland to go. The roadshows were initiated by the National President Marlena Hoft-Marwick as a national opportunity for spiritual renewal and for learning new ways of engaging others to join us. Ten regions participated and many travelled long distances and all appreciated the generosity and commitment of hosts.

**The Day Programme:** The day consisted of two talks from the National Spiritual Director with help from NZ Government and Community Agencies concerned with future-proofing social development in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Talk 1 was an analysis of the global geo-political and socio-economic context and how a faith-based organisation like ours can make a difference. Talk 2 looked at why conflict occurs which was compared with the foundational teaching of Frederic Ozanam on unity and collaboration.



Photos on this page from the various Roadshows around New Zealand.

Roadshow report continued...

**The Evaluations and Outcomes:** Evaluations were positive with helpful suggested alternatives for the future. All regions produced Action Plans for 2020 with a view to engaging new members. The evaluations showed that the opportunity to mix with other Vincentians, develop new works and involve younger people was seen as the most beneficial outcome. Next came affirmation of the two talks which provided an understanding of what was happening in the world and why, and allowed an opportunity to produce concrete action plans to meet new needs. Others liked how the values of Christianity were presented in a more motivational way and how a fresh look at Vincentian spirituality and prayer can help to do these new works. Others liked the way they were empowered to speak out and have their views accepted.

To date the *establishment of new Action Plans and engagement of younger members to help with these works* at the **conference** level – shops and projects were everywhere admired with approval – was orientated more towards community and family/whanau rather than assisting individuals and focused more on greater networking with other churches, community centres and other NGOs. There was also a call to greater collaboration nationally in works and the ongoing spiritual development of Vincentians for these works.

The areas of action focused on were as follows, in order of numbers suggesting them:

- Care for those who are **lonely** with various suggestions of response according to local situations.
- Supporting those with **mental health difficulties** at the immediate local community level.
- Supporting **children without food and clothes**, especially by the empowerment of whanau.
- **Prisoner** visitation of inmates with support for *job training* when discharged, especially through Vinnies shops.

In all action responses there was general approval of the shoulder-tapping of people to increase membership and providing challenging works to retain members.

**Fr Jeff Drane**, *Spiritual Director*

**Anne-Marie McCarten**, *National Executive Officer*



Photos above from the Rotorua Roadshow

## Vatican launches eRosary



### **The Vatican is trying to attract youngsters with a new wearable bracelet and an app to pray.**

The Catholic church have launched an eRosary bracelet, to attract rich tech-savvy millennials and help them learn “how to pray for peace in the world” and learn about the gospel.

The Vatican is promoting a “smart rosary” bracelet connected to a mobile app that’s activated by making the sign of the cross. The device can be worn as a bracelet and is made of 10 consecutive black agate and hematite beads. It also has a data-storing “smart cross”.

The wearer can choose to pray the standard, contemplative or thematic rosary. Themes include Laudato Si, migrants and refugees, vocations and young people.

In a press release the Holy See Press Office says:

“In a world of indifference and in the face of so many injustices, poverty, elementary rights denied, praying for peace in the world means reconciling ourselves in our daily relationships, with the poorest, with the stranger, with different cultures and spiritual and religious traditions, but also with our land, our forests, our rivers and oceans.

It is made up of 10 consecutive black agate and hematite rosary beads, plus a data-storing ‘smart cross’.

The wearer can choose between three options to pray; the standard rosary, a contemplative rosary or a thematic rosary, which will be updated throughout the year.

It also has personalised religious content, as well as health tracking. The traditional rosary is used to aid prayer and meditation. Its beads are counted as prayers are recited.

It “serves as a tool for learning how to pray the rosary for peace in the world,” according to a news release from the Vatican.

“This project brings together the best of the Church’s spiritual tradition and the latest advances of the technological world,” it said.

The eRosary launch comes as October is the month of the rosary. The gadget is water-resistant and compatible with Android and iOS smartphones.

# Obituaries

## Gabrielle McLaughlin & Mary Grant

**In August and September 2019 two beloved members of our conference passed away. Gabrielle and Mary joined St. Joseph's Conference, about 10 years ago.**

Through their membership of the conference Gabrielle and Mary became best friends.

In many ways Gabrielle and Mary were very similar. Both possessed a sense of humor, a commitment to social justice and an acute awareness of the needs of others. They were very much hands on, stepping out of their personal comfort zones in the interests of others.

Gabrielle and Mary advocated on behalf of beneficiaries seeking to secure entitlements with WINZ as part of The Year of the Poor initiative in St. Josephs Parish.

Mary recognized students from struggling families and nominated them for inclusion on our Area Councils Catholic Student Assistance Fund. Mary maintained a personal interest in the students' progress. Mary was immensely proud when she read to the conference school reports on her students' achievements.

Gabrielle was an active member of the Upper Hutt Housing Trust established to address the housing needs of the displaced in our community, and a member of our parish Social Justice Group. Gabrielle was an amazing cook and provided and served hot meals to the monthly meals for the needy.

Gabrielle and Mary did their SVDP visiting together. They were great friends and made an awesome team, out in all weather, bringing their combined wisdom and Christ's love and compassion to those they met in the name of SVDP.

Gabrielle passed away at Hutt Hospital surrounded by family on 24 August 2019.

At Gabrielle's requiem, Mary spoke of their friendship and expressed her sense of loss and sadness, and prayed, asking Gabrielle to be there to help as she faced her own journey.

Mary passed away at home surrounded by family on 20th September 2019.

At Gabrielle's and Mary's rosary, conference members recited the prayers for the deceased member and shared experiences of Gabrielle and Mary's inspirational and generous contribution to the works of SVDP.

Gabrielle McLaughlin and Mary Grant, RIP.

*Words by Mike Driscoll*

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## David Clement Lampen-Smith

Passed away peacefully at home on Wednesday the 18th of September 2019, a devoted member of St Francis & All Souls Conference, Devenport, Auckland.

## Congratulations!

Pictured below are long serving members of Westport Conference, West Coast Area Council with their service awards.



## Contact Us

### News in Brief

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### 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)

