

# News in Brief

August 2015 | Issue 8



MEMBRE DE LA SOCIETE DE SAINTE-VINCENT DE PAUL



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 an event coming up or a story you would like us to share, please email it to us at: [national@svdp.org.nz](mailto:national@svdp.org.nz)

## Resources on the theme of Loneliness available to conferences

This year the National Board has asked Conferences to focus on the theme of loneliness and how we, as Vincentians, can reach out to those in our community – our neighbour, our colleagues, or a new settler family at Mass and extend the hand of friendship. A simple act of sharing a cuppa with an elderly neighbour, or a visit with a lonely teen or an isolated new settler family can make a world of difference to them.

As part of this focus, all Conferences will shortly receive posters and pamphlets to distribute throughout their Conference, or parish. (Additional copies can be downloaded from the members' section of this website.)

As a member of St Vincent de Paul reaching out to others can have a profound positive affect on those who are isolated and socially alienated.

Let us reach out to all who are lonely and make the time to personally visit, just as our founder, Frederick Ozanam, did so long ago.

## Reaching out to the Lonely, St Bernadette's School, Christchurch

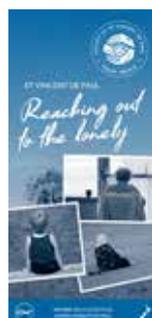
Young Vinnies at St Bernadette's school recently had their commissioning Mass, coinciding with Bishop Barry's visit to the Hornby and Darfield Parish. It was great to see the Young Vinnies standing alongside the adult members of the local conference and dedicating themselves to the service of the poor. The Young Vinnies have been involved in many other activities including making cards at Easter for lonely parishioners.

## Update on Appeals for Vanuatu and Nepal

Throughout the Society the plight of those who suffered devastation as a result of the Nepalese earthquake and the cyclone in Vanuatu has really touched the hearts of Vincentians. As the result of two national appeals, we have raised:

**Nepal - \$75,000**  
**Vanuatu - \$51,000**

There have been many examples of conferences, Young Vinnies and parishes coming together to raise money for these appeals. On the following page is a selection of just a few of them.





## Appeal activities for Vanuatu and Nepal

### Reefton, Sacred Heart Young Vinnies

The Young Vinnies of Sacred Heart School, Reefton, recently held a raffle and a "Wearable Arts Competition" to raise funds for the Nepal Earthquake Appeal.

Over \$400.00 was raised by this small school of only 26 students. What a wonderful effort from this great little school, whose students willingly gave their time and money to help the stricken people of Nepal.



*Fearghus Bratten about to get his head shaved!*

### Our Lady Star of the Sea, Christchurch

Our Lady Star of the Sea student leader, Fearghus Bratten, shaved his head and raised over \$1000.00 for Vanuatu. The Young Vinnies co-ordinated a coin trail of Vanuatu and the surrounding islands. They also held two food drives for the St Vincent de Paul Society food bank at Stanmore Rd!

### Young Vinnies, St Joseph's, Papanui

Young Vinnies at St Joseph's Papanui raised funds for Nepal by running a 'guess how many lollies in the jar' competition. They also organised a mufti day where children were encouraged not to wear any 'label' clothing on the day. The mufti day and 'guess the lollies in the jar' raised \$1000.00 for Nepal.



*Young Vinnies at St Joseph's, Papanui*

## New Vinnie's Shop Opens in Christchurch

**The new Vinnie's Shop was officially opened by the Most Reverend Barry Jones, Catholic Bishop of Christchurch, on Saturday July 6th, 2015.**

The new purpose built retail outlet will replace the original shop which was badly damaged in the earthquakes of 2011, and demolished shortly after because it was deemed dangerous to the public and Vinnie's staff.

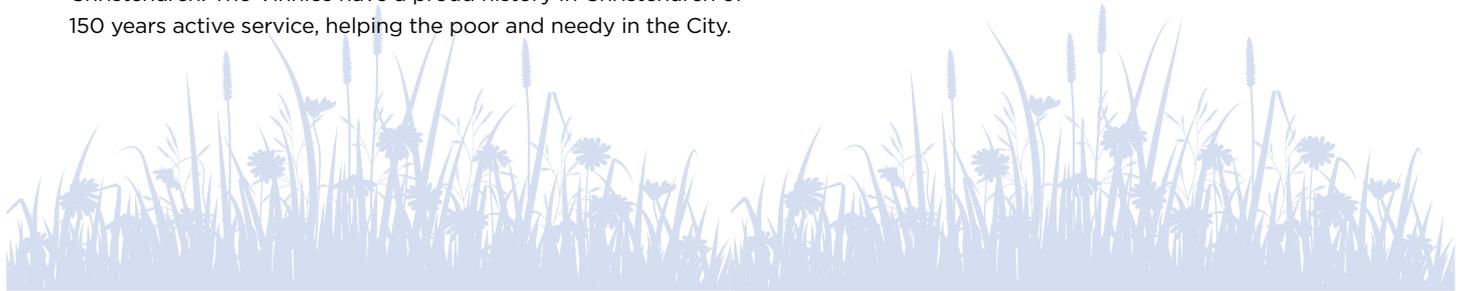
Since that time, a make-shift shop operated at the rear of the property in a warehouse that was used for sorting and storing clothes and furniture. Over the last three to four years, staff and the buying public have managed under trying circumstances.

The new Vinnie's Shop will be a modern retail outlet, offering the best in retail shopping experience, and will provide a lovely work environment for staff and volunteers. This facility promises to be a great asset for the Christchurch Society of St Vincent de Paul, contributing towards the much needed income to support the work of the Society in the Christchurch community.

The shop is located at 265 Stanmore Road, Richmond, Christchurch. The Vinnies have a proud history in Christchurch of 150 years active service, helping the poor and needy in the City.



*At the opening of the new Christchurch Vinnie's Shop. From left to right: Peter Consedine, Board Member, Keith Norton, President Christchurch Area Council, Christchurch Trust Board, Most Reverend Bishop Barry Jones, Bishop of Christchurch, Penny Marks, Operations Manager, Francois Baudet, Parish Member for Project Management of Rebuild.*



## Winter Soup Project in Taupo a Great Success

Once a year, during June, July and August the Taupo Conference, along with the support of parishioners, holds a Soup Project. Conference member Bronagh Sinton came up with the idea for this successful project and this year the soup has been flying out the door to families as soon as it is collected.

The project works by having ingredients donated and volunteers and members of the Society or Parish making the soup with added fresh vegetables. The soup is then frozen in donated two litre-ice-cream containers and then taken to the Food Bank. Some parishioners even make up their own soup and then let the Vinnie's team know if it needs collecting.

The ice-cream containers, with a Vinnie's logo on them and information regarding what type of soup is inside as well as the date it was frozen, have been chosen because they stack very well in freezers.

Last year the Soup Project distributed over 180 litres of home-made soup to families in need. That's over 90 two-litre ice-cream containers!!



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## Maurice Kearney - 46 years of Service to the Society

In recognition of over 46 years dedicated to serving the needs of the community, Maurice Kearney received a special Vincentian award at St Patrick's Church, Pukekohe with Parish Priest, Father Robert Steele, parishioners and guests.

Members of the St Vincent de Paul South area came together to celebrate Maurice's Vincentian journey both past and present. This also provided an opportunity for the council to connect with one another, especially with the student leaders of De La Salle College, McAuley High School and Sancta Maria College. The celebration and meeting were enjoyed by all, and the next opportunity to connect is eagerly looked forward too.



*Maurice Kearney with his long-service certificate with Sam Mano, Schools Community Projects Co-ordinator, SVDP and representatives from De La Salle College, McAuley High and Sancta Maria College.*

*(Photo credit: Gene Paul Kiely)*



# Membership and Growing the Society of St Vincent de Paul



## Conference Address, 2014 - Anthony Finnigan

It is a condition of our membership of this Society that we actively seek to add workers to the harvest. I am speaking to you today as the Leaders in our Society. You have the responsibility of guiding and nurturing Conferences.

Nothing that I will say to you today should be news to you, nevertheless it needs to be said. Conferences failing to attract new members or considering cessation because they cannot find work to do, should look at themselves. It may be a pointer that we are not serving the needs which the Society regards as fundamental. There could be a number of reasons, all or some related to other. (See Statute Part 1-3.1)

An early President General had this to say – *“the member of the St. Vincent de Paul Society who considers himself only as a bearer of bread to a poor family understands neither charity, nor the Society, nor the poor. The Society has never been, and never will be, an association of porters. What moves a poor person to the bottom of their heart is that you think of them, look after them and love them”*.

What this is saying is that membership enables a practical Christian expression of a wish to live the gospel by loving our neighbours and helping the poor and needy.

A recent Pope more than once confirmed that membership of our Society is a vocation – a calling to give personal service. In order to achieve the attainment of a vocation, the Society has a huge responsibility to maintain and increase the spirituality of its members. Modern-day life and some activities currently involving

Society members have pushed this vital component of our Society life into the background. The concept of the Festival Meeting, a part of the Society Rule, has become almost non-existent in some areas.

To achieve the ends specified by our membership we have to return the Society to a fount of Grace to enable us to carry out our work in the way Blessed Frederick Ozanam directed. We must involve the Conferences more in forming our spiritual guidance and leadership. (See Statute Part 1-3.12)

Can I bring to your attention a recent exhortation by Pope Francis in his very readable (almost necessary reading) “The Joy of

Gospel” or, as you more likely recognise it, “*Evangelii Gaudium*”. Amongst other things, he points out that ordained ministers in our church are at the service of the laity of whom the church (that includes us) needs more who must have a deeply rooted sense of community, with great fidelity to charity. To help us achieve service as laity, dealing with the poor community he gives us this further instruction.

To realise the need we have to understand Jesus’ command to his Disciples: *“you yourselves give them something to eat!” (MK6.37)*. *That means not only working to eliminate the structural causes of poverty and to promote the integral development of the poor, but to conduct small daily acts of solidarity in the meeting the ‘real’ needs which we encounter.”*

In addition, he also tells us *“today, as the church seeks to experience a profound missionary renewal, there is a kind of preaching which falls to each of us as a daily responsibility. It has to do with bringing the gospel to the people we meet, whether they be our neighbours or complete strangers. This is informal preaching which takes place in the middle of a conversation, something along the lines of what a missionary does when visiting a home. Being a disciple means constantly ready to bring the love of Jesus to others and this can happen unexpectedly and in any place: on the street, in a city square, during work, on a journey.”*

In addition to this papal teaching, i.e. Church teaching, we have our own rule. We are required to meet, preferably weekly, but at least twice a month during which time we have spiritual reading / discussion together with discussion on particular cases. Meetings and all gatherings are preceded by and conducted with suitable prayers. If matters other than these are taking up meeting time then a rethink of priorities is needed. (See Statute Part 1- 3.31)

Our rule also requires we hold regular Festival Meetings, one of the purposes of which is for spiritual reflection, the other including a cup of tea, is social. In recent reports it is noted there is more acknowledgement of social events for members than Festival Meetings. We should aim to develop a level of spirituality which becomes second nature to us in carrying out this work. Why so much formality in an informal setting you may ask?

*We have a rule. This is unique. It has Papal approval, which in virtually every other case is reserved for religious orders.*

As a source of material, the rule and its study provide us with a treasure trove. It seems to me that, amongst other things, our



## *Conference address continued...*

seeming desire for informality has led us to diminish the spiritual aspect of our membership in this great organisation. We spend our valuable time considering material things almost exclusively. In my ideal of the Society I see money playing less of a part. I feel we have allowed the provision of material needs to outweigh and overtake the need for us to ensure our work is seen as a vocation leading us to Holiness while attending to the needs of those requiring our help.

We have money and have to use it but not at the cost of excluding the spiritual, holiness aspect of our work. There is a saying "*people of goodwill by joining together can change the world*". It takes more than just talking about it.

Goodwill - Good - Why do good?

There is nothing wrong with it making me feel good. In another sense it has to be for my personal development in that I will achieve the end which God has in mind for me. We dedicate ourselves to the service of others in order to achieve the Divine wish. Have we forgotten that in this age when

anything that makes you feel awkward cannot be good for you. We must seek a clear understanding of our motives. The Society, through its attention to member's spirituality could aid this understanding.

In other words, our motives must be shaped by and be reconciled to the spiritual values as expressed in the Society of St Vincent de Paul. We have had many good leaders in this regard whose writings continue to inspire and motivate us.

Paying attention to the means of achieving a spiritual dimension in the Society will reflect in the action and demeanour of our members to the extent non-members will recognise us for it and maybe consider the Society worth joining.

In contemplating how to attract members, I suggest you consider the spiritual aspect of membership, while giving thought to the more practical means as may be advocated by my fellow presenter.

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## *~ Rae Bell ~*

12th November 1929 - 6th May 2015

Rae was an active member of the Society as a Palmerston North conference member and served as Manawatu Area Council President. His wife, Josie, was also an active member of the Palmerston North Conference and passed away in August 2013.

"As soon as you turn any corner in this man's life you find names: names you expect, and names you don't. Often there are names of people who this world doesn't notice, but who have been the recipient of the love of God through Rae. Throughout Rae's life he demonstrated a true commitment to helping others in the true Vincentian spirit, throughout his working life in the prison system in New Zealand, his work with his late wife Josie at Fareham House, his family and community life, and his work for the Society.

Rae was formed by his family to be:

- honest
- have the knowledge that every person has a deep worth
- that nothing can come between us and the love we have for one another and the Lord
- that extended family are vital
- and that to serve is the way in which one receives.

Together with his late wife Josie, they took on Fareham House, a borstal home in Featherstone for young women in need, and created a place of reform.

They opened their home to two children when they found out they could not have their own.

At Arohata Women's Prison the women knew him by name and called out as he walked the wings on Sunday afternoon. At his funeral his coffin was draped with a crocheted rug they had made for him.

Rae came to Palmerston North to establish a prison. This was Linton. It was to be the first prison based on the principles of restorative justice. It would rehabilitate, feed those who had only known physical or emotional hunger, clothe them in dignity and culture, educate those who couldn't read, and ensure that the imprisoned were visited. Rae was to lead the transformation of the prison service to a basis of restorative



## Continued...

justice based on the Roper Report. Sadly, it was stopped by a change in government.

Once you met Rae Bell you were incorporated and nothing could come between you and him.

One day he moved a mother and her children to a safe house. It was not just a case of making a phone call. He put aside a day to take her and the children in the truck. He bought them coffee and meat pies in Foxton and encouraged the kids about their new school and the importance of reading and looking after Mum. He then organised for the food parcels and the blankets in their new flat.

Rae has taught his grandchildren some valuable lessons:

- to sit and listen
- to reflect and to pray
- to die to self and serve those in need
- no person is beyond redemption
- true justice heals and reforms
- the honest, down to earth, gentle and those who pursue what is good and true are
- welcomed into the kingdom of God or life in its fullness
- to welcome into your heart a good woman and love her
- to welcome and rejoice in your children, be one in a wide and rich family and treasure friends and family and your good God.

So Rae, oh good and faithful servant, enter into the kingdom prepared for you.

Eternal rest grant to him, oh, Lord and let perpetual light shine upon him."

*Many thanks to Rae's family for allowing us to use excerpts from his eulogy.*

## St Mary's Conference, Nelson remembers those who have recently died.

Our faithful members of St Mary's Confence, Nelson who were dedicated supporters and worked with the gifts they had.

Mary Cairns                      Desmond O'Regan  
Roma Cowan                      Josephine Persico  
Joseph Cotterell                Noreen Rodgers  
Lorna Day                         Ronald Shadbolt  
Christine Gardner



## St Vincent de Paul in New Zealand 150 years

In 2017 we will be celebrating our 150th Anniversary as a Society in New Zealand and we need your help!

If you have any old photos, newspaper clippings or any archival material that we could use in our celebrations then please contact:

**Keith Norton, Christchurch Area President,**  
PO Box 26007, North Avon, Christchurch, 8148.

## 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)