



MEMBRE DE LA SOCIETE
DE SAINTE-VINCENT DE PAUL



SOCIETY OF ST VINCENT DE PAUL

News in Brief

November 2015 | Issue 9

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

Letter from the New National President for the Society in NZ



Dear Area Presidents,
Conference Presidents,
Area & Conference office
bearers, Conference
members, Associates
and all Volunteers

assisting in our Shops and other Vincentian work in New Zealand.

Firstly, my sincere thanks for your vote of confidence at our AGM on 3rd and 4th October electing me as National President of the Society in New Zealand. I will use my utmost strength and my skills to serve you in this important role, to enable you to carry out our mutual commitment to serve the poor and needy in New Zealand.

At the AGM I outlined my Vision Statement to those present. It is as follows:

To deliver a committed and joyful team of Vincentians to lovingly serve the poor and suffering of NZ in accord with The Rule.

As Vincentians we have a vocation to follow Christ through service to those in need; serving in hope and showing our commitment through person-to-person contact. My prayerful thanks to each of you for your past and future efforts.

I look forward to meeting many of you in the near future. Please feel free to contact me on any matter.

God Bless

Terry Comber - National President

David Williams CGI Representative visits NZ

The Society in New Zealand was honored and very blest to have David Williams attend its AGM held in Tauranga 2-4 October 2015. David's presentations on the Rule & Statutes and the Canonization of Frederic Ozanam may be found on this website (under AGM presentations).

David's focus, on behalf of CGI, has been on The Rule (our Spirituality) & Statutes since the 2003 General Assembly that approved all three Parts.

At the moment, much of David's time is taken up with negotiations with the Vatican (Cor Unum) about the status of the Society in the Church following Pope Benedict XVI's Motu Proprio "In the Service of Charity". There are many difficult and serious issues involved, but many of the points are very interesting. The only people involved directly in the negotiations are the President General, Michael Thio and David, but the

Board are consulted and kept informed, and wider consultation of the IEC has also taken place.

David was on the Commission for the Canonisation of Blessed Frederic and involved in producing his Book of the Sick. He is also involved with the cascading International Formation & Training Commission that began by training National Presidents. David is consulted about most of the disciplinary issues which arise in various countries and which also reach the desk of the President General.



Food Banks

A volunteer's personal reflection

People present for a food parcel for all manner of reasons from all different walks of life and it is a privilege to be representing the St Vincent de Paul Society in assisting to meet a need in Dunedin when people feel they need help.

I am aware that I am only one of a team of people that make this whole operation run smoothly. When I turn up for 'my day' of duty at the food bank everything is in order. Like elves in the night, kind volunteers have pre-prepared the food parcels and they are neatly made up and stacked on the shelves. Canned and packaged foods are on the shelves neat and tidy, and any fresh/frozen foods stored where they need to be. I am also aware that on other days people from the Parish Conferences bring in their contributions to the food bank and also the local Food Share team organise the fresh fruit/vegetables and bread to the freezer. So all in all a good number of people have organised the food before I even get to interview the client.

Families today, the elderly, and people isolated for whatever reason can struggle from time to time. It might

be the cost of a school camp or school uniforms, a high power bill or load of wood over winter or the struggle of paying a bond/setting up a new flat and looking for a new job all at once.

For some people it takes a lot of courage to come along and ask for help and knowing that they can be given assistance from St Vincent de Paul must be so very reassuring. One man told me recently that with no food left and no money on his phone and not knowing where to turn for help he only needed to ring an 0800 number to be given a list of helper agencies that were close by and walked into town to St Vinnies, assured of some assistance when he got there.

As a volunteer it is such a humbling experience. It gives me an opportunity to be 'the hands of Christ' in a practical, caring and hands-on way.

New Computers for St Joseph's Primary, Matata

A computer project initiated in South Auckland by Jim Norris, Chris Filipino and their volunteers has now spread to Matata to the local Catholic primary school, St Joseph's. Principal Bridget Rika sends her thanks on behalf of her school community...



"Thank you so much for the computers.

We held a parent evening on the 2nd of September, 2015 for parents/whanau to find out more about google apps, reading eggs and the computers. This proved to be very successful and all families have been allocated one computer each. Many hours were spent by two personnel who uploaded our reading and maths programmes on each computer. A pod of 10 computers have been installed in the junior classroom. They are not connected to the net and are used specifically for reading, writing and maths/numeracy. The children absolutely love using them and the classroom reading levels are starting to really take off!

Thank you to all concerned for making this happen."

‘Fashion Week’ comes to Palmerston North

An overcast Saturday afternoon in Palmerston North didn't stop over 45 people gathering for the third fashion parade for St Vinnies, Palmerston North. Themed on 'Winter', with references to fashion week by our capable compere Lawrence, six models gave a snap-shot of six categories that are currently available in the Palmerston North shop for very reasonable prices. Jasmine and Nick from St Peter's College gave a performance before a scrumptious delicate afternoon tea served in china cups.

Jasmine on keyboard and Nick on Saxophone from St Peters College, Palmerston North provided entertainment after the fashion parade.



Alfred Adam Receives First Papal Honour in Samoa

On Sunday, 27th September Mr Alfred Adam of Lotopa was awarded a Papal Honour at St. Theresa's Catholic Church, Lepea.

The honour is the Insignia of the Augustae Cross for the Church and the Pope. It is also known as the "Cross of Honour." It is given for distinguished service to the church by lay people and clergy. It is the most prestigious award given to the laity by the Pope, and Mr Adam was the first person in Samoa to receive this honour.

Mr Peter Courtney, former president of the Auckland St Vincent de Paul Society in New Zealand, also the recipient of a Papal honour several years earlier, presented Alfred with his gold cross and framed certificate.

Alfred Adam has served the Catholic church in many ways and especially through the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Alfred joined as a volunteer in the very early days of the Society, and has been unwavering in his dedication to helping the poor, the disenfranchised, and the incarcerated of Samoa. Over that time he has served as president for 28 years and treasurer for 17 years, and is currently treasurer.

The process involved in Mr Adam receiving a papal honour took over two years.

"It was quite difficult to achieve," Mr Bendinelli, current President of SVdP said, "especially as we wanted to keep it a surprise from Alfred, which was no easy feat."

Mr Adam and his family were joined by 15 members of the society at his local parish of St Theresa's, on the feast day of St Vincent de Paul, 27th September 2015, to honour their longest serving member, and celebrate his Papal Honour, before sharing brunch together at Amanaki Hotel.

Mr Adam expressed his surprise and deep gratitude for the honour.

Our thanks to Peter Bendinelli and Leilani Curry for sharing this story.



Pictured above: Peter Courtney, past president Auckland SVDP, New Zealand with Alfred Adam.



Testimony: The life of Dr Paul Takashi Nagai (1908-1951)



Survivor of the atomic bomb of Nagasaki the Vincentian and scientist Dr Paul Takashi Nagai dedicated his working life to relieving the suffering of those he encountered. A renowned scientist, he was a pioneer of the use of radiology in Japan, especially for the prevention of tuberculosis.

First an atheist, Dr Nagai gradually began an inner journey that led, little by little, to the reading of the Bible and the “thoughts” of Blaise Pascal, a French mathematician and philosopher. “There is only enough light for those who wish to see it, and only enough darkness for those that hold to the opposite view”.

Moved by the actions of the Christians of Nagasaki, Nagai was baptised at the age of 26 and then became a member of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. Nagai would then go on to discover the writings of Frederic Ozanam, visiting the sick and those most in need, providing them with support, comfort and food.

Subsequently he married Midori, a young woman who was a strong believer. The couple had four children. In June 1945 Takashi learnt that he was suffering from leukaemia due to the exposure to X-rays that he had come into contact with during his work. He was given two to three years to live.

On the 9th August 1945, at 11am, an atomic bomb landed on Nagasaki. Dr Nagai managed to free himself from the rubble, but his carotid artery had been cut by a shard of glass. After receiving emergency treatment, he worked alongside other doctors to provide care for the victims of the bombing.

He returned to his home, to find that his wife had died. He decided to relocate to the very place where the bomb had exploded and here he built a small hut with pieces salvaged from his old house. Here, until the end of his life, he received visitors and wrote several works which received instant success both in Japan and around the world.

He died in 1951 at the age of 43. Twenty thousand people attended his funeral.

Associate Membership - Another way to Contribute to the Society

Our family and I have had a long involvement with the St Vincent de Paul Society. During the 1980s the local Vincentians in New Plymouth would often drop into our place with a food parcel and stay for a chat. I also remember biking around with Bob Begley, doing gardening and visits to other families in need.

I was in Nelson for 1992-93 and it was President Tony West who was often dropping into the Youth House with food, a full gas bottle, and to see how things were going. Some of the other Vincentians made themselves available to help with youth events we were running.

Most recently I've been involved with the Plimmerton/Porirua Conference. The people there are a great support - they are very encouraging and take an interest in how our two young boys are doing.

I'm not able to make the Conference meetings during the week but there is still plenty to do as an Associate Member. At different times this has involved deliveries for the Shop, helping with a Young Vinnies event, delivering food parcels, or organising food, clothing, or furniture donations. I see it as a meaningful way of putting our Faith into practice; as well as 'paying it forward'. My family and I have had lots of Vincentian support through the years, and it's satisfying to be able to pass this on to today's families who need a hand up.

If you or someone you know has a few hours to spare, have a think about whether being available as an Associate Member might be the ministry for you!

Some Highlights from Sri Lanka

Archdiocese of central council of Society of SVdP

1st January 2014 to 31st December 2014



The first monthly meeting of the year was held at Sethsarana conference facility in Madampe where a series of events had been planned for office bearers of the deaneries throughout the day. Members visited 15 students chosen by the Janasaviya Institute of Chilaw. The children were given snacks and drinks and games were organized for them. Each child, with the assistance from the deaneries, were given a gift voucher to purchase shoes.



During the drought we lent a helping hand to our brethren in Buttala by donating water tanks with the help of the deaneries.



A well was built for the residents of the Vincentian village in Halkandawila and blessed by Rev Fr Thusita before being handed over to the occupants.



Other events during the year included:

Office bearers of deaneries visiting Mother Theresa's Home in Mutuwal and helping to clean the rooms of elders and preparing food. As well as a cash donation being given for dinner for the elders.

To commemorate St. Vincent De Paul's feast day Mass was celebrated by Rev. Fr. Amila Vanderwall.

The Past National President of New Zealand and his wife were welcomed by members of the Moratuwa Deanery and taken to Halkandawila to visit the Vincentian village.



Brendon Ford

Te Puke branch of St. Vincent de Paul recently lost their foundation member, Brendon Ford, who had suffered years of debilitating Parkinson's disease.

Brendon and his identical twin brother Brian grew up in Wellington but after leaving St. Patrick's College they both moved to South Taranaki to pursue farming careers. They progressed from farm worker to share milking and then to farm ownership. They purchased a sheep and beef farm and farmed it together until the 1980's. Their young families grew up together during this period and it was a very special time for them all.

Brendon and his wife Rosanne decided on a change of lifestyle and shifted with their family to a kiwifruit orchard in the Bay of Plenty. It was here at St. Patrick's Parish in Te Puke that Brendon's long involvement with St. Vincent de Paul began.

From the inaugural meeting at Te Puke on 12th April 1988 he was an active member, and through his long years of membership he held every position in the Conference. Always exceedingly charitable in his outlook, Brendon took on many cases viewed as hopeless causes, was patient and kind, and never sought to reform those people who were helped.

In 1990, he became the President of the Western Bay of Plenty Area of SVDP and served with great dedication in this role until 1995.

His Requiem Mass was well attended by SVDP members past and present, including past-National President Des Mulhern and his wife Cheryl. Verdon Kean and Des presented the Offertory, and John Cavanagh said the Society prayer beside the coffin.

A Vincentian guard of honour was formed as the casket was carried from St. Patrick's Church. May he rest in peace.

Jim Webber

James Alfred Gerard Webber (JAG)
72 years of age passed away on July 18th, 2015 at the Vincentian Home and Hospital for the elderly.

Jim was a loyal stalwart of the Onslow Vincentian Conference in Wellington for many years, served as President of the Conference several times and President of the Wellington Area Council for five years from 2001. He also served as a Trustee on the Society's Special Work of the Wellington Catholic Homes Trust from 2001 till his death. His long association and contribution to the Vincentians will always be remembered particularly those who benefited from his personal services.

Jim is survived by his wife Satchio, two daughters, son and grandson who attended to Jim over the past six months of his illness. The funeral service took place on Thursday 23rd July, 2015 at a Requiem Mass held in St Benedict's church in Khandallah, Wellington. Jim's family and friends re-countered many interesting and amusing memories from his early days in Wellington, his career in the NZ Police through to his present associations with the Head Injury and Stroke Foundations in Wellington.

The St Vincent de Paul Society will remember Jim in their prayers for the deceased. May he rest in peace.

Len Maxim

Len Maxim, 83 years old passed away on April 10th, 2015. Len was a man of great faith, compassion, integrity and humour. He was also a Vincentian. His life-long contributions to the society will always be remembered—for his personal service and to the individual's whose lives he has touched, to everyone who sees his painting in our Wellington office.

He lovingly shared his life with Judy, Evelyn and Elsie. He was father to Paul, James, Leo and Esther, father in law to Judith, Penny, Tamsin, Jan and Scott, and grandfather to Rita, Simon, Angus, Scott, Amy and Freja.

The funeral service took place on Wednesday April 15th, 2015 at 11am at the Church of the Holy Cross in Miramar, Wellington. His children recounted while celebrating his life that he was always there for them as children and was an attentive grandfather. Memories of him varied from his work with satellites, his mathematical mind, and his infamous exploit of incorporating a bit of bird poop into a painting (which had accidentally landed on his canvas).

St Vincent de Paul Society is so thankful to have been able to count Len Maxim among their members.

Bob Giddy

Long time Vincentian in Picton - passed away October 2015. May he Rest in Peace.

Manawatu Volunteer Recognition Award

Congratulations to Harry Lampen-Smith for his Volunteer Long Service Award for 43 years of continuous volunteer membership of the Society of St Vincent de Paul, servicing the needy in our society. The Manawatu Volunteer Recognition Event, 2015 was held at the Palmerston North Convention Centre to honour nominated volunteers in seven categories from the local community. Harry's award at the evening was one of only three in the Long Service Award category from 13 nominations.



Harry Lampen-Smith

Congratulations Young Vinnies!

Young Vinnies at the commissioning Mass at St Brigid's, Dunedin. Congratulations, everyone.



St Vincent de Paul in NZ 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:

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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