



Sisters of Charity
of Australia

Keep in Touch

KIT
MAGAZINE

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Inside this month

Welcome to the June 2020 edition of *Keep in Touch*, where the mood is one of looking forward and looking back.

In this time of the coronavirus, we look back to the past and how the Sisters of Charity responded to another pandemic, in another century.

And we look forward too ... to the continuing mission of the Sisters of Charity of Australia's social justice arm, the Foundation.



Welcome!

Who would have dreamed I would be saying to you since our last edition that our world has changed and we are surrounded by an atmosphere of fear, sadness, and uncertainty, world-wide, that leaves us wondering how to maintain hope through this pandemic.

And here we are in the middle of it all, still living the joy of the Gospel. Pope Francis calls it a "propitious time," a time out of which something better can come, a time of opportunity, a time to imagine what is possible. Two of our great spiritual writers Richard Rohr OFM and Ron Rolheiser OMI offer us reflections on this time being as "a teachable moment" and being "conscripted to a sabbatical," allowing ourselves to be graced by what lies within this uninvited time. We put our hope in God's plans for us, peace, not disaster (Jeremiah 29). This pandemic crisis is calling us to care for one another – that is our true work.

In the last edition of *Keep In Touch*, I informed you that our Sisters would be gathering in September for the 28th General Chapter of the Sisters of Charity of Australia. Due to COVID-19 this has now been deferred. By March, 2021 we might be able to have a Chapter. Even though these are unpredictable times, what is predictable is God's presence with us and God's Providence to provide.

In this edition of *KIT*, we have an interview with the new CEO of the Sisters of Charity Foundation, Louise Burton. Louise joined the Foundation last month and the Sisters are delighted to welcome Louise and to support her as she carries the mission of the Sisters of Charity Foundation into the future.

Above: Sr Annette Cunliffe, Congregational Leader at the time of the creation of the Sisters of Charity Foundation, and current Congregational Leader, Sr Clare Nolan

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Welcome!

From page 1

Earlier this year, we celebrated the establishment of the Foundation 20 years ago, and there was a wonderful liturgy at St Vincent's Chapel in Potts Point, followed by a gathering in the Heritage Centre and Archives building. Opened just a year ago, the Centre has quickly become home for many Congregation events. Although it has been closed for around two months, we are looking forward to the time when it is safe once again to welcome you to this wonderful place.

The past has been on our minds, especially during this time of isolation so there has been more sleuthing in the Archives. Anne Cooke, Archivist with St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney has kindly allowed us to publish two extracts from her upcoming book. They give us a glimpse into the last century, and the measures the Sisters took to try to manage the deadly Spanish 'flu pandemic.

Some research which has been carried out recently on a painting on display in the Heritage Centre of our Foundress, Mary Aikenhead, and another on the old school bell from St Vincent's College, Potts Point. The bell is also on display in the Heritage Centre.

As we continue to navigate these times of coronavirus, please be assured that the Sisters of Charity of Australia value your support and interest. May you and your families keep safe and well in this time of the coronavirus pandemic.

Clare Nolan rsc
Congregational Leader

Q and A with Louise Burton

Louise is the newly appointed CEO of the Sisters of Charity Foundation Limited.



Can you give a brief outline of your working life in private sector and NFPs.

I have been very fortunate. I have had a very exciting career, the richness of which has been the diversity, from philanthropy, global corporate, for purpose and government. And that diversity has added to the breadth of the leadership experience.

Most recently I have worked at HammondCare. Before that, I worked at Philanthropy Australia (PA), the national peak body. PA promoted the importance of strategic and engaged philanthropy. We were in a position to advocate for social change in our society.

There, I became aware of the SoC Foundation as they were members of PA. That was in 2011. During my time there, I advised funders, the new generation – millennials and not for profits. It was a great advantage to be able to be a catalyst in the sector.

You come to the Foundation from HammondCare.

At HammondCare, I was responsible for leading the first capital building campaign for the Darlinghurst Home. This purpose-built home was an innovative model, and a first for Sydney. HammondCare is renowned for their unique expertise in aged care, palliative care, dementia care and support, mental health, pain management and research across these areas.

HammondCare had been set up by the Rev. Bob Hammond in the Depression, who worked first with young families who had become homeless.

He bought land at Hammondville (near Liverpool), which he paid for with the proceeds of his super fund. Families were able to build their own homes and eventually own them. He really was entrepreneurial for his time in the Depression. Hammondville continues today.

The Darlinghurst Home capital building campaign was very successful, attracting many new major donors and supporters. The \$20 million fund, built a beautiful lifetime home in Sydney's inner east for older people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness with complex high care needs.

What did you know of the work of the Foundation before?

During these uncertain times of COVID-19, it was a dilemma making the decision to take on a new challenge.

I believe the SoC Foundation has enormous potential. The vision of the Sisters of Charity Foundation needs a stronger profile to enable partnerships, as well as attract new donors and supporters. Part of my role will be to raise the profile of the Foundation, especially to new audiences through digital media, and foster relationships.

Undertaking research about the Sisters and the Foundation, watching the 200th anniversary of the establishment of the first congregation in Ireland, highlights and reiterates the resilience and leadership of the Sisters and the responsibility we have to ensure the Foundation creates a lasting legacy.

Obviously, we need divine providence now. Rapidly, we will witness more of the impact of the pandemic on the economy: The ramifications of unemployment in particular and the flow on affect in the community.

How do your personal values align with those of the Foundation?

I think first of all I have a strong Catholic faith. My parents were actively engaged in charities like the St Vincent de Paul Society and Matthew Talbot Hostel, as well as the local parish, throughout my childhood. They shaped my values to support those in need.

I have always been mindful of the power of education, as it provides opportunities and choice especially for those who may have come from disadvantage. Education is powerful and able to alter people's lives – and that's why the Foundation's scholarship programs for those who have been in "out of home care" are so important.

Along with my Christian values, of utmost importance are family values, which include a commitment to community. I believe we should give to our local community, that we should not forget the people, those in rural and regional areas, as well as those who flee their countries and seek a new home in Australia.

It is my aim to strengthen the social justice arm of the Sisters of Charity Foundation, so the values of the Sisters can exist in perpetuity.

It's a huge responsibility, as well as being exciting at the time of the twentieth anniversary of the Foundation, which creates an opportunity to bring a new transformative approach and build on what has been achieved so far.

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Mary Aikenhead – An alternative depiction

The lead up to the 2019 relocation of the Congregational Archives presented a number of challenges and opportunities.

The extensive planning process that took place in advance of the move involved staff assessing the entire Archives collection, to ensure each item was accounted for and could be transported safely.

This logistical planning exercise afforded Archives staff the opportunity to access and assess those collection items dormant for many years.

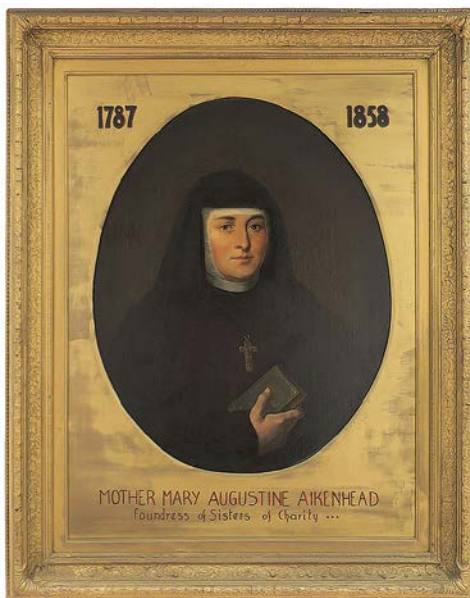
One such item was a large oil portrait of Mary Aikenhead, foundress of the Congregation. The portrait was transferred to the Archives in 1993, following many years of display at St Vincent's Convent and the Generalate at Potts Point.

The portrait had effectively been in storage for more than 25 years with no opportunity to be displayed and fully appreciated.

Painted in 1880, the portrait is signed with the initials 'J.A.'



Research on the history of the painting and to identify the artist is ongoing. It is believed the portrait was more likely painted in Australia rather than Ireland, as the subject



is depicted wearing the Australian-style collar as a part of the religious habit, not the Irish split collar Mary Aikenhead would have worn.

The painting is striking for several reasons. Many readers will be familiar with the most frequently reproduced depiction (below) of Mary Aikenhead, the 1844 portrait painted by the Irish portrait artist, Nicholas Joseph Crowley (1819–1857).



As there are no known photographs of Mary Aikenhead, all depictions of her appearance are creative works, most of which have been based on the familiar Crowley portrait.

The oil portrait in the Archives collection offers a remarkably different depiction of the foundress of the Congregation.

Prior to the Archives' relocation, significant professional conservation work was undertaken on the portrait, preserving and stabilising the fragile work to ensure it can continue to be appreciated for generations to come.

The relocation of the Congregational Archives and provision of appropriate storage allowed this (and other) artworks to be stored in an accessible format and displayed so they can be viewed and appreciated by visitors.

The reactions of visitors to this previously unfamiliar work have been fascinating. They have ranged from "That's not Mary Aikenhead!" to instant appreciation and adoration.

An alternative depiction of a notable figure such as Mary Aikenhead is an invaluable resource.

Any Sisters with recollections of this portrait are invited to contact the Congregational Archives Collections Registrar, Imogen Kennard-King, at imogen.kennardking@rscoffice.com to share their memories.



St Vincent's and another pandemic

In this current COVID-19 epidemic, it is possible to hear echoes of another – the Spanish ‘flu outbreak which began in 1918. The 1918 influenza pandemic, caused by an H1N1 virus with genes of avian origin, was the most severe pandemic in recent history. It’s estimated about 500 million people – one-third of the world’s population – became infected with the virus. The number of deaths was estimated to be at least 50 million worldwide.

That was a very different epidemic from now. In September, 1918 the first news of outbreaks of “pneumonic influenza” in South Africa and the United States of America reached NSW. Soldiers returning from active service in World War I were most probably the cause of carrying the disease from Europe.

By October, Spanish influenza had arrived in New Zealand and on October 25, 1918 a ship arrived in Sydney from New Zealand with infected passengers on board.

St Vincent's Hospital Sydney Archivist, Anne Cooke, has written about the outbreak and the response of the Sisters at the hospital to it in her yet-to-be-published history. She has kindly given permission for these two extracts to be published.

“A never-ending stream of influenza patients”

The pandemic of Spanish influenza reached Sydney in January, 1919. The disease struck with amazing speed, individuals who were healthy in the morning were dead in the evening. The most vulnerable were young and healthy

men, rather than the old and infirm. The disease came in waves peaking first in mid-April, followed by an even more virulent outbreak in June when over a third of the population of Sydney was affected.

As World War I ended, this new and dreadful scourge appeared. The pandemic gradually spread throughout Europe. The Australian Government watching its approach drew up stringent quarantine regulations. By November 1918 the disease had struck in its most virulent form in New Zealand and was spreading rapidly.

In the same month, a ship full of returning soldiers arrived at Freemantle with two cases on board and was quickly quarantined at Woodman's Point.

At the end of the month an old White Star liner, now the troopship the *Medic* arrived in Sydney with 100 cases of influenza already diagnosed amongst the passengers.

It had left Australia only a few weeks before but when the Armistice was signed returned to Australia stopping briefly in New Zealand, where the crew and passengers encountered influenza. The *Medic* anchored off the Quarantine Station at North Head and those diagnosed with the

disease were taken ashore. Within two days the number of cases had risen to 300 and a few days later seven of these had died.

Among the nursing staff already on the ship was Elizabeth Kearey, who had graduated in 1908 and among the nursing sisters who responded to the call for help at the Quarantine Station were several St Vincent's graduates: Olive Brownlow (1913) who had returned to Australia in July after eighteen months military service; Amy Richardson (1917) who, immediately on finishing her course had enlisted for military service and was based at Randwick Military Hospital and Annie Egan, a country girl from Gunnedah, who had graduated from St Vincent's only in June.

The virulence of the disease is demonstrated by the fact that most of the nurses quickly contracted the disease; Olive Brownlow recovered, as did Amy Richardson who was soon able to resume her duties at Randwick Military Hospital.¹

However, after several days' illness Amy Egan died. There was a public outcry because as she lay ill she asked for a priest and such was the fear of contagion that the authorities refused permission, even though the priest offered to go into quarantine.²



Within days, the Mother Rectress, Mother M. Gertrude Healy, recognised the urgency of the situation. Wards were cleared and rearranged, and as far as possible only influenza patients were admitted.

Urgent surgical cases were diverted to the Private Hospital to be treated free and non-urgent treatment postponed. As part of the government's containment measures, places of entertainment and schools closed.

The teaching Sisters, freed from their teaching duties, visited the homes of sufferers, giving first aid and offering what comfort they could.

In 1964 Sister M. Giovanni rsc recalled those terrible times:

*'The flu's onset was sudden, producing a high temperature and incessant delirium with consequent violence, sufferers became clamorous and often almost uncontrollable. It was a new disease. There were no antibiotics or effective treatments and patients were nursed as for pneumonia – if there was time before they died. Day by day we heard of hundreds dying as the epidemic took hold.'*³



.....

The cold, hard data – SVHS Annual Report, 1919:

In 1919 there were 356 cases of influenza treated, of whom 286 recovered (80%) and 63 died (17.6%); one remained by the end of the year and six cases were 'unrelieved'.

Of the age groups who contracted influenza, 260 of the 356 were in the 21-44 years age group (73%) and 43 in the 45-64 years age group (12%) and only 9 in the 65 years and over (2.5%) – probably low statistics for the older group because of the earlier mortality rate generally.

The statistics for influenza far outweighed those for any other medical complaint reported that year.



Clockwise from top, left:
 Mother M. Gertrude Healy
 The front entry of St Vincent's Hospital, 1918
 Sister M. Giovanni

A never-ending stream of influenza patients was admitted to St Vincent's, and for nearly two months the medical staff worked day and night. The senior physician Dr Charles Maher was an untiring worker, snatching a little sleep whenever he could, and his example inspired the staff. The priests giving the last sacraments became familiar figures around the hospital. No visitors were allowed and the anxiety of relatives was pitiable as they came to the doors seeking news of their loved ones.

1 *St Vincent's Hospital Annual Report 1918* p.27
 2 *Northern Star*, Lismore Saturday 7 December 1918 p.5
 3 *Reminiscences of Sister M. Giovanni. Quarterly Review* July-Sept 1964

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St Vincent's and another pandemic

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The hospital's pharmacy prepared a vaccine from cultures made from sputum specimens obtained from patients at the Quarantine station. Many of the staff were inoculated, and vaccine supplied to doctors on the staff and in neighbouring districts.⁴ Despite this, Sisters and members of the staff also contracted the disease including Sister M. Ignatius D'Arcy.

A native of Killabo, County Clare in Ireland she had started nursing at St Vincent's in 1877 and for over 42 years had managed St Patrick's Ward (the men's medical ward), sometimes known as the "Sailors' Ward".

An experienced and skilful nurse, she would spend hours at the bedside of a patient who needed special care. This devotion was to claim her life. During the epidemic a poor wharf labourer dying of influenza was admitted to her ward.

She nursed him devotedly until she became so ill she was no longer able to carry on her duties and was admitted to The Coast Hospital,



St Patrick's Ward, 1915

Her condition was diagnosed as influenza and she was returned to the hospital where she died a few days later.

After a service in the hospital chapel the funeral cortege left for Rookwood Cemetery and as it passed the Church of the Sacred Heart (near the hospital) the bell tolled a sorrowful farewell.



Above: Front Row: Sisters Aloysius Murphy, Gabriel Burke, Rev. Mother Francis McGuigan, Mother Xavier Cunningham, Sisters Gonzaga Russell, Ignatius D'Arcy, Second Row: Sisters Fidelis Hogan, Margaret Ennis, Dominic Poppenhagen, Brendan Lynch, DeSales Cleary, Leonard Armstrong-O'Byrne, Cecilia Bruton, Agnes Shortill. Third Row: Sisters Rodriguez Jones, Clement Stapleton, Gertrude Healy, Teresa Lockington, Laurentia Jaguers, Alexis O'Gorman, Fachnan Sheehy, Benedict O'Brien. December, 1895.

Desperate times, desperate measures

In Australia, the States had decided upon extensive quarantine measures to be imposed once the disease had been identified in Australia. After cases were identified in Victoria, NSW imposed further restrictions.

Traffic was stopped at the borders and a quarantine period of seven days was imposed on all travellers by land or sea. As time passed, New South Wales was accused of causing serious trade and commercial dislocation and aggravating severe shortages of food and fuel. The quarantine measures proved of no avail and as the epidemic spread into New South Wales the restrictions between states became redundant.

In an endeavour to limit the spread of the disease, public health measures were introduced in the Sydney area. Major public events were cancelled, public places were to be avoided, and the wearing of masks in public made mandatory. Schools did not resume following the holiday break and church services and public meetings were prohibited.

An uproar arose, especially among churchmen who were prohibited from conducting services, when at first no restrictions were imposed upon hotels. In response, a proclamation was issued restricting the number of people permitted in the bar areas of hotels. The protests continued and a few days later hotel bars were also closed.



Clockwise from above, left:

Sacred Heart Hospice, 1921

Nurses' Home, 1918

The SVHS Medical gymnastic room, 1920

The Hospice grounds, 1920

St Kevin's Ward, 1912

Below: An excerpt from the *Catholic Press*, Thursday 8 May, 1919, p.19

Local hospitals were full to capacity and emergency hospitals were set up around the city in places like the Royal Agricultural Showground and the Deaf and Dumb Institute.

There was a shortage of doctors as many had not returned from war service, so medical students were enlisted to assist local doctors as they treated the sick and dying. The Mother Rectress at St Vincent's cancelled non-urgent cases and transferred patients to the Private Hospital to make wards available for flu victims. As the schools were closed teaching Sisters were able to assist with home visits and nursing duties.

A newspaper account of the time describes how:

Twelve Sisters of Charity – six from the Sacred Heart Hospice, four from St Vincent's Hospital and two from Mount St Patrick's Convent Paddington, nursed the sick in the Paddington area.⁵

They attended 231 patients in their homes and not one death occurred. In one case the whole household was afflicted and the Sister before starting to do the washing, had to chop the firewood herself. Besides nursing the Sisters did the washing and scrubbing in other houses. They also spent their own money on medicines, invalid food and clothing.

⁴ Clarke, H.C. *History of St Vincent's Pathology Department* (SVH Archives)

⁵ *Southern Cross* Friday 16 May, 1919 p.5

THE NUNS AND THE 'FLU.

Their Heroism.

IN THE CROWDED HOSPITALS AND IN THE HOMES.

The full extent of the value of the work the good nursing Sisters of the various Catholic hospitals have performed in combating the plague is not even yet fully known or realised by the general public. Indeed, the full extent of that work will probably never be known, because the good Sisters are so modest and retiring that it is with the greatest difficulty that any particulars at all of the magnificent work they have performed, and are performing, can be obtained from them.

Public Recognition of the Nursing Sisters.

Glowing tributes to the heroic work being done by the Sisters of Charity in Paddington, in connection with the epidemic were paid at a meeting of the local Municipal Council on Monday evening. The health officers' report stated that 12 Sisters of Charity—six from the Sacred Heart Hospice for the Dying, four from St. Vincent's Hospital, and two from Mount St. Patrick's Convent, Paddington—had rendered valuable assistance to the sick in Paddington. They attended in their homes 231 patients, and not one death occurred. In one case the whole household was affected, and the Sister, before starting to do the washing, had to chop the firewood herself. Besides nursing, the Sisters did the washing and scrubbing in houses. They also spent their own money on medicines, invalid food and clothing. On the resolution of Alderman J. J. McDonnell, the thanks of the citizens were tendered the Sisters for their noble and self-sacrificing efforts on behalf of the sick poor.

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St Vincent's and another pandemic

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Above: Open-air Mass in the grounds of the then Sacred Heart Hospice, Darlinghurst, February 16, 1919.

Right: An extract from *Freeman's Journal*, Thursday 6 February, 1919.

To overcome the prohibition on church services, Monsignor O'Haran, the local parish priest obtained permission to say Mass in the open air provided people were scattered and not grouped together. He asked Mother Cecilia Bruton if she would allow Mass to be offered in the pavilion in

the Hospice grounds for the parishioners of Darlinghurst. Mother Cecilia was delighted at the prospect and considered it an honour. Accordingly on three successive Sundays Mass was celebrated at the Hospice, an event recorded for posterity by a local photographer.

Correction: VASCA story, KIT March 2020

The photo at right is of Sister Helen Young and Fr Peter Clifford OFM.

In the photo at far right, Sr Mark Lehmann (left), is with Sr Margaret Mary Moore who is partially hidden behind a VASCA client.

The correct year of approval for VASCA's foundation was 1977.



Mass in the Open Air.

SYDNEY'S CATHOLIC CEREMONIES ON SUNDAY LAST. REMINISCENT OF THE PENAL DAYS.

Many Catholics assisted at the Divine Sacrifice of the Mass on Sunday last, under conditions which will remain long in their memories. As a health precaution, the civil authorities had decided that all churches must be closed to large congregations; and in accordance with the decision of the Diocesan Synod, as disclosed by his Grace Archbishop Kelly's published letter to the Minister for Public Health, the Catholic Church authorities were prepared promptly to fall in with the requirements of the health administration. The result was that the usual Masses were not offered in the city or suburban churches.

Permission, however, had been granted to hold open-air ceremonies, and although a cancellation of this permission was notified in the Sunday papers, no official intimation was received by the Catholic Church authorities that could warrant them withholding from the people the Masses which had been arranged. To St. Mary's Cathedral, therefore, flocked several gatherings of devout Catholics, and, kneeling or standing reverently on the grass in the Presbytery grounds, they were able to assist at the short Masses offered up during the morning. The sight was an inspiring and memorable one, and many Protestant passers by paused and lingered a while, no doubt edified, certainly impressed, by the remarkable scene and its evidence of Catholic devotion

IN THE SUBURBAN PARISHES.

Arrangements had been made where practicable in most of the suburban parishes to hold Mass in the open air. Many priests were able to notify their parishioners, and in other cases where people visited their churches they were able to learn there of new arrangements. The result was that in most suburban parishes the people were able to hear Mass, advantage being taken of the open spaces which in the majority of cases were available. At St. Mary's North...

...in the presbytery grounds. At Darlinghurst the Masses usually offered at the Church of the Sacred Heart were transferred to the grounds of the Hospice near-by. Picturesque ceremonies were witnessed in thinly populated districts like Pymble, where the faithful gathered under the shade of the trees whilst Mass was celebrated at a temporary altar. And so throughout the various parishes it was found that wherever possible the priests made provision for the offering of Mass, and it was remarked that some of the circumstances were curiously reminiscent of the penal days of Australia or of the earlier, darker days of Ireland; when it was only by strategy that the priest and people could join together.

St Vincent's Convent bell – then and now

Many members of the Sisters of Charity community will be familiar with the very large bronze bell which once hung at the original St Vincent's Convent at Potts Point. It has tolled for commonplace and extraordinary events in the life of the Congregation since it was forged.

While its physical presence might have been unremarkable to many, this presence has lingered for more than a century, seeing the Congregation and its broader community through everyday life and unprecedented times of change. Throughout evolutions in both convent and college life, the bell has remained.

Those who have seen the bell in person will know it has a striking and imposing presence. It is cast of a bronze alloy which makes the bell incredibly heavy.

Informed estimates put the weight of the bell at about 400kg. The stand which displays the bell is sturdy and strong enough to hold this weight, but more on that later.

The bell was made by John Danks & Son Pty Ltd Sydney who operated a factory at Blackfriars Estate on Buckland St, Chippendale from 1894 to 1931.

Despite extensive research, the exact age of the bell is currently unknown. However it was likely forged between 1894 and the early 20th century, which is later than some previous estimates. The bell was named after St John Berchmans, the patron saint of altar servers and hung at the original St Vincent's Convent, Potts Point.

From the time of its installation until Vatican II, the bell was rung



frequently, up to ten times a day to call Sisters to Mass, prayer, and visits to the Blessed Sacrament, for the Angelus and recreation. It was also tolled for the funerals of Sisters, including those of Mother M Francis McGuigan and Mother M Edmund Daniel.

Above: The bell on display on its stand, built from remnant cedar and tallow wood from the original 1839 Tarmons building

Mother M Edmund Daniel with Sisters at St Vincent's Convent, Potts Point, December 1948. The occasion also marked the end of her two terms as Superior General

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St Vincent's Convent bell – then and now

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Following Vatican II, the use of the bell was reduced to the daily midday Angelus and calling St Vincent's College students to Mass each Friday.

The fond memories many in the Congregation hold of this object are shared by many in the St Vincent's College community, given the intertwined histories of the Congregation and the College.

As well as being a bold visual and auditory reminder of the rich traditions in the life of the Congregation, the bell has a broader heritage significance. Heritage is not static, and objects like this one tend to evolve and change with time, just like the people and communities they represent. In the case of the convent bell, when the original 1839 Tarmons building was demolished and a new convent building was opened on the same site in 1966, the bell was removed, retained and reinstalled in the new building.

When the 1960s Tarmons building within the grounds of St Vincent's College ceased functioning as a convent in 1993 and the Sisters moved to a new convent at 1 Rockwall Crescent, the bell was again retained. At this time, Owen Magee (1925-2007) built the stand for the bell that is still used today.

The stand was built from remnant cedar and tallow wood timber that was retained from the original 1839 Tarmons building when it was demolished in the 1960s. Owen Magee was a great friend of the Sisters of Charity and



a notable figure in his own right. This stand allowed the bell to again be retained.

Constructing the stand from timber from the original Tarmons building allowed the bell to retain its connection to the original St Vincent's Convent and maintain a sense of continuity.

The strength and endurance of the stand is a testament to the engineering expertise of its maker. The bell is an excellent example of the work undertaken by its maker.

The establishment of the Sisters of Charity Heritage Centre in 2019 allowed the bell to follow in the footsteps of the Sisters, moving from the grounds of St Vincent's College to 1 Rockwall Crescent. The bell had been on long-term loan to St Vincent's College who

had kindly provided the significant space required to store such a large object.

Given the size and weight of the bell and stand, the Congregational Archives staff were presented with the logistical challenge of relocating the bell from the black and white Victoria Street entrance to the College, to the Heritage Centre at 1 Rockwall Crescent.

Thanks to some professional expertise, the relocation went off without a hitch and the bell is now displayed at the Heritage Centre. Many ask if the bell still works, the answer to which is "Yes".

It makes a very loud, clear sound. Due to the size and weight of the bell, we ask all visitors not to touch or try to ring the bell yourself!

Sisters of Charity Foundation 20th Anniversary

Sr Clare's welcome to the Eucharist to mark the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the Sisters of Charity Foundation.

It is very special to the Sisters that the Foundation has decided to celebrate this important milestone in the Chapel here at what we once called our "motherhouse" and at our new Heritage Centre.

It signals a very deep appreciation of the Sisters' history and values which are at the core of the Foundation's mission. But it also signals something much more ... the unequivocal commitment to taking the history and values forward as the Foundation continues to grow in meeting needs in the community, embed the charism in its programs ... and continue the social justice mission of the Sisters of Charity in perpetuity.

When the Foundation was established in 2000, its focus was on providing funds for Sisters' ministries. However, it has brought us great joy over the years to watch the Foundation grow its focus external to the Congregation ... developing creative, dynamic programs that provide practical relief for the poor and marginalised ... programs delivered in partnership with others and organisations, that share the vision and values.

Practical, creative solutions delivered in partnership with others go back to the very beginning of the Sisters of Charity, indeed even before Mary Aikenhead established the Congregation.

As a young woman, Mary Aikenhead was a friend and frequent visitor to the home of

Mrs Anne O'Brien in Dublin, and together with Fr Daniel Murray, they planned many charitable works and delivered material aid to the afflicted and the helpless.

It was through these early experiences as well as being impelled by the love of Christ, that Mary resolved to form an unenclosed order to walk with the poor and marginalised, offering practical relief and spiritual nourishment.

180 years later we are gathering to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the Sisters of Charity Foundation, guided by generous like-minded people, partnering with aligned organisations, courageously delivering on the mission through programs that creatively deal with emerging needs.

Knowing that our Foundation is

- delivering vital funding to small community organisations that offer targeted solutions to local problems,
- providing a safe bed for survivors of modern slavery or homeless asylum seekers,
- creating employment opportunities for people living with disability in Western Sydney or
- giving young people who cannot rely on their birth parents, the opportunity to achieve their potential through education, fills our hearts with great joy.

Over the years the Foundation's partnership approach has increasingly aligned itself with that of the Congregation.

Our Chapter Statement says:

We are Sisters of Charity, women of Mary Aikenhead, contemplatives in action, impelled by the love of Christ.

We live the joy of the Gospel.

We respond courageously, to the call to mission, going out to the margins, walking in partnership with others.

The Foundation, fuelled by the love and support offered by all of you celebrating with us this evening, is continuing to strengthen its reach and sustainability so that it can continue to deliver the mission in perpetuity – which brings all of the Sisters great comfort.

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Sisters of Charity Foundation 20th Anniversary

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- 1 Gathering in the Chapel to celebrate the Foundation's 20th anniversary
- 2 Sr Gaye Reynolds, Val Kennedy and former Foundation CEO, Hon. Reba Meagher
- 3 Sr Margaret Valentine, Greg Khoury, Denise O'Shaughnesy
- 4 The Foundation Chairman, Richard Haddock AO
- 5 Srs Helen Clarke and Maria Wheeler
- 6 Sr Diedrey Hickey and Foundation guests



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- 7 Sr Eileen Browne and Judy Christie
- 8 Dawn Hooper and Jan Christie
- 9 Srs Genevieve Walsh and Margaret Fitzgerald with Heritage Centre Advisory Committee member, John Geoghegan
- 10 Srs Colleen Noonan and Anne Taylor
- 11 Alma Gatica, the JRS' Carolina Gottardo and Sr Margaret Guy
- 12 Sr Margaret Beirne and Fr Darryl Mackie
- 13 Srs Jennifer Fahey and Kathleen Doohan

The Sisters of Charity Foundation partners with the Salvos

The Sisters of Charity Foundation's patron, Governor-General David Hurley, in February launched a joint program between the Foundation and the Salvation Army to provide transitional housing for survivors of modern slavery in Australia. The event took place at the Sisters of Charity Heritage Centre, Potts Point.

The move complements anti-slavery measures being implemented within the Sydney Archdiocese.

Sr Margaret Beirne, Vicar of the Sisters of Charity, spoke at the opening.

"Today's launch of this anti-slavery program begins a joint ecumenical venture of our Christian traditions in continuation of the work of Mother Mary Aikenhead. The Salvation Army's predilection for the poor fits well with the Sisters of Charity," she said.

The Memorandum of Understanding for the program between the Salvation Army and the Sisters of Charity Foundation was signed in November 2019.

Among the guests were the Governor-General's wife, Mrs Linda Hurley, Salvation Army Australia Commissioners Robert and Janine Donaldson, interim anti-slavery commissioner for the NSW Government, Professor Jennifer Burn, and John McCarthy QC of the Sydney Catholic Archdiocese Anti-Slavery Taskforce.

In her welcome, the Congregation's Vicar, Sr Margaret Beirne said: "Today's launch of this anti-slavery program begins a joint ecumenical venture of our Christian traditions, a way of proceeding dear to the heart of Mary Aikenhead and



From left: The Governor General, David Hurley, and Mrs Hurley, Chair of the Foundation, Richard Haddock, and Commissioners Robert and Janine Donaldson, of the Salvation Army of Australia; Sr Margaret Beirne and the Governor General

symbolised in practical reality in so many of her founding ministries.

"The Salvation Army's predilection for the poor fits very well alongside her vision! Founded in the east end of London just seven years after Mary's death, it seems to me that she and William and Catherine Booth would have made a fine team – and today you as their descendants are doing just that.

"In 1838, and just a few hundred metres from where we are now seated, five sisters were greeted at the Woolloomooloo steps by the then Bishop of Sydney, John Bede Polding, the Attorney General, the Honourable John Plunkett, pupils from St Mary's Cathedral school, and a large crowd of people.

"Sir George Gipps (NSW Governor from 1838 to 1846), is on record, along with his wife, as being particularly respectful and generous to the sisters. Soon after beginning their ministry with the women convicts at the Female Factory at Parramatta, the sisters

asked the Governor if he would arrange for a proper laundry and sewing rooms for the women; his immediate positive response ensured that their situation improved dramatically, as did their spirits.

"He also insisted the Sisters be allowed to give religious instruction and spiritual comfort to the women convicts at the female factory at Parramatta. While these women were not victims of the vicious crime of trafficking as such, they were certainly victims of a cruel convict system and may well have been abused in various ways by their prison warders.

"Their ministry of caring and advocacy for such women was the earliest work carried out by the Sisters. This afternoon, we renew our commitment to such an important ministry, and acknowledge the vision of our Foundation and the Salvation Army in launching this joint Anti-Trafficking program."

Q and A with Louise Burton

From page 3



Louise Burton, CEO, Sisters of Charity Foundation Limited

What were the greatest challenges facing social justice organisations before COVID-19?

And in this age of the pandemic, how have those challenges changed?

The sector is under-resourced and the demand is growing on services and programs, which we identify through the Community Grants Committee.

We need to advocate constantly to government for the plight of asylum seekers or those subjected to modern slavery. Now, the need

is greater than we could imagine in this unprecedented environment of the pandemic crisis.

We understand from our partners the Asylum Seekers Centre, that the refugees are not eligible for job keeper or job seeker payments, and hence they find themselves without any income or job.

You have been in the role for a short period, but what are the priorities which you have identified with the SoCF board?

- 1) How we respond in this crisis, the SoC Foundation is committed to social justice in our society.
- 2) How we can demonstrate leadership as the Sisters have done in history.
- 3) That the Foundation is able to adapt as required to support our partners in the community who are undertaking such crucial programs and services during and post the pandemic.
- 4) From these learnings, we will be able to formulate a robust sustainable strategy for the long-term future of the Sisters of Charity Foundation.

What is your most pressing concern in this new role?

Responding fast enough to these issues. I feel I have a time clock on me and I don't want us to miss the mark.

Personal life?

I am married, to David. We are very close to both our families. My faith is a pivotal part of my life, through Sydney's St Joseph's Edgecliff and St Francis Paddington.

I have been an advocate for funding and supporting those who have been disadvantaged.

Sr Rose Anne Croke RIP

Sr Rose Anne, who celebrated her 100th birthday in March, died in Sydney on May 20, 2020.

Her Words of Remembrance will be in the September issue of *Keep In Touch*.



Sisters of Charity
of Australia

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