



THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF AUSTRALIA

Keep in Touch

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A newsletter for Sisters of Charity, their families and friends, and supporters of our Congregation



Historic Times for the Sisters of Charity

On July 1st Mary Aikenhead Ministries was established, heralding a change in governance for the various facilities founded by the Sisters of Charity. The Sisters' facilities will now be governed by a group of Trustees:
- Richard Harpham (Chairman), Elizabeth Dodds rsc, Linda Ferrington rsc, Rowena McNally and David Robinson. The official signing was carried out within a prayerful setting that acknowledged the history of the ministries and the great significance of the transfer.



BRISBANE

The Brisbane ceremony was held at the Mary Aikenhead Centre, Mount St Michael's College, Ashgrove, and was attended by Sisters and supporters from South East Queensland.

"In this 21st century these ministries are characterised by good Governance and excellent management, largely undertaken by lay men and women who share a passion for the service of the poor that originally inspired Mary Aikenhead.

We believe that now, while the Ministries are so strong, is the time to ensure their future by placing them in the committed hands of these Trustees and those who will follow them," said Sr Annette Cunliffe, Congregational Leader of the Sisters of Charity of Australia.



SYDNEY

The Sydney ceremony was held in the main hall at St Vincent's College, Potts Point.

"As Chairperson of the Trustees of this new entity, I would like to reassure all of those who have respected and admired and in many cases dedicated themselves to the works of the Sisters' Ministries, that we will operate the Ministries in a tradition that the Sisters built over the many years of their leadership," said Richard Harpham, Chairman, Mary Aikenhead Ministries.



MELBOURNE

The Melbourne ceremony was held in the auditorium at St Columba's College, Essendon.

"This tradition has many components, but there are three principles which I see as being extremely important and to which Mary Aikenhead Ministries will be fully committed.

First, our colleges, hospitals, research centres, aged care facilities and welfare programs are and will always be works of the church. Many may agree that they represent
(continued on back page)

Mary Aikenh

BRISBANE



Sisters from Brisbane and Toowomba pictured under the "Compassion" banner with Congregational Leadership Team members and Ministry Trustees.

SYDNEY



Sisters of St Joseph Congregational Leader, Sr Anne Derwin, Sr Annette Cunliffe rsc and Mr Jim Baillie. Mr Baillie led the legal team that oversaw the transfer of assets to the Ministry.



Sr Anne Crowley rsc, Mr David Robinson (Ministry) and Sr Christine Madden rsc

MELBOURNE



Sr Dawn Bang rsc with Sr Laureen Dixon rsc



Ms Rowena McNally, Sr Laureen Dixon rsc, Mr David Robinson, Sr Elizabeth Dodds rsc, Sr Gaye Reynolds rsc, Mr Richard Harpham, Sr Annette Cunliffe rsc, Sr Linda Ferrington, Sr Teresita Marcelo rsc, Sr Libbey By (abs)

Head Ministries Blessing Ceremonies



Srs Cate O'Brien rsc, Linda Ferrington (Ministry Trustee), Mathilde Harnischfeger rsc and Kathleen Munce rsc.



Sr Nola Riley rsc and Ms Danielle Doyle, Executive Director, St Vincent's Hospital, Brisbane



ry Trustee)



Sister Libbey Byrne rsc and Dr Mark Askew



Congregational Leader Sister Annette Cunliffe, rsc anoints the hands of Mr Richard Harpham, Chairman of Mary Aikenhead Ministries. Each Congregational Leadership Team member anointed the hands of a Ministry Trustee.



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Srs Margaret Case rsc, Anne Turner rsc, Trish Shidders rsc, Denise McCarthy rsc and Linda Ferrington (Ministry Trustee)



Sr Annette Cunliffe rsc, Professor Michael Doyle and Sr Elizabeth Dodds rsc (Ministry Trustee)

Sister Patricia Grantham, rsc

21.09.1942

27.03.2009



As we gather to celebrate Patricia's entrance into eternal life, may I offer a reflection, but not a eulogy. A reflection on the life of a valiant woman of deep faith and commitment, and a reflection that is the fruit of 44 years of treasured friendship.

Patricia was born at Gunnedah in NSW, the daughter of Leo and Marie. She was educated by the Gunnedah Sisters of Mercy, the Sisters of Charity at St Vincent's College Potts Point, and the Sydney University for part of 1961. Patricia entered the Sisters of Charity in July, 1961, and was professed in January 1964. She completed her nursing training at St Vincent's Hospital Sydney in December, 1967.

Her first assignment in January was to St Vincent's Lismore 1968 for four years.

It was during this time that Patricia's

parents were killed whilst returning from visiting their darling "Paddy". It was also later this same year that she developed the first symptoms of Multiple Sclerosis - a disease she lived with for forty years without complaint!

In 1972 Patricia undertook nursing administration studies at the College of Nursing, and in 1973, her midwifery training at St Vincent's Maternity Hospital, Melbourne.

She then moved to St Joseph's Hospital, Auburn for one year, prior to two years at Sacred Heart Hospice Sydney as Superior and Administrator. In 1978, Patricia was appointed Director of Nursing at St Vincent's Hospital Sydney - a position she held for four years before returning to Sacred Heart Hospice for a further seven years as Administrator. It was during this time that Patricia was involved in the rebuilding of the Hospice, and the recognition of Palliative Care as a special ministry of the Sisters of Charity. Patricia was particularly attentive to the development of the garden, and to patients having access to a view and fresh air!

Patricia spent two years as a member of the Sisters of Charity NSW Health Services Management team and in 1991 was appointed to St Vincent's Private Hospital Sydney as Chief Executive Officer for four years. In 1995, Patricia enjoyed a Renewal year, part of which was spent in Ireland where she developed a love of the Irish and all things Irish!

Patricia welcomed a return to Melbourne in 1996 - despite the

coldness of the weather. She relished her new ministry at Caritas Christ Hostel, Kew where she co-ordinated the care of our aged Sisters, supervising the closure of the hostel and the move of the Sisters of Corpus Christ Aged Care, Clayton. How ironic it was that just a year later she would be in need of the care of Corpus Christi where she spent her last two years.

Patricia's family meant so much to her: Parents Marie and Tom Grantham, affectionately known as Ma and Pa Kettle... Tom and Judy, Kim, Mel and Eve, Claudine and Alex. To them she was a sister, aunt and friend. She was also friend of so many, a wise and loving friend with a calm warm smile.

To those who shared these recent months of her life, including Patricia's community at Mononia, the staff at Corpus Christi Clayton, Monash Medical Centre, St Vincent's & Mercy Private Hospital, St Vincent's Hospital, Caritas Christi Hospice - and above all, Liz Reid, Mary Gabrielle and her "Kew-less" friends led by Lynne and Jan. She would give special thanks for your loving and devoted care.

In many ways Patricia was a very private person, but most of us will be familiar with her attributes: a sense of humour, the use of understatement, simple living, a love of food...and an incredible memory. After a life full of grace, Patricia is now at peace, and I have a suspicion that she will be playing full-back for the Sisters of Charity; and impossible as it may seem, she will be kicking goals for us, her family and friends. May she be at peace with her loving God.

Maria Cunningham, rsc

REACHING OUT: Whaddup Youth Group

St. Vincent's Hospital

Toowoomba recently received a prestigious St. Vincent's Health Australia 2008 National Award for their ongoing support of the Toowoomba Whaddup Youth Group. This award recognizes the highest standards of authentic partnerships between St. Vincent's Health facilities and community groups. The community-initiated Whaddup program aims to develop the personal and social wellbeing of Indigenous youth and is run by a band of dedicated local Indigenous and non-Indigenous volunteers.

The program runs every Friday night during the school term and includes transport for 50-70 student participants, group and individual activities and a BBQ dinner. In recent years the scope of activities has evolved to include a developmental focus on the leadership potential of participants, and some students have been chosen to attend camps designed to foster these skills.

These highly contested awards acknowledge the mission of the Sisters of Charity, Australia, to



Pictured – Sr Deirdre Gardiner, Sr Marueen Parker RSC, Carl Yuile (General Manager, St Vincent's Hospital Toowoomba) Sr Tarcisius Donovan RSC, Stacey McCarthy (Whaddup Youth Group), Alfred Orcher (Whaddup Youth Group) and Darlene Garvey (Director of Mission, St Vincent's Hospital)

“make a positive difference to the lives and health of both individuals and communities.” Anecdotal evidence points to the popularity of the Whaddup program and opportunities to be mentored by respected community members and elders as having a direct impact in the declining number of court appearances by Indigenous youth. A total of \$22,000 was gifted to the Whaddup program with \$20,000 funding coming from St Vincent's and Holy Spirit Health and the \$2,000 was an additional sum received in recognition of being awarded the St Vincent's Health 2008 Partnerships Award.



Children participating in the Whaddup Program



Smiles of gratitude for the Whaddup volunteers



Friday nights can't come too quickly

Gap Year Experience

"You cannot really sum up the GAP experience in Zambia in words. It is absolutely unforgettable! The biggest thing that will stay with me is the incredible spirit of the people. Extreme poverty is rife within Zambia but despite this there is an incredible friendliness and generosity amongst the people we met. Everywhere in this beautiful place we were greeted with warmth and openness."

Comment from Ros Hiser, Participant in the GAP Experience Program

In the April 2009 issue of K.I.T., you would have read about the GAP Orientation and Sending Forth. Now after three months in Zambia and three months in Hackney, the first two participants arrived safely on Sunday 30 August at Tullamarine airport.

Ros Hiser spent three months in Chikuni and Megan Gaffney in Maamba. Because of school holidays, Becc Hyland did part of the time in Nakambala and the rest in Chikuni with Ros, while Clare Christie was in Roma and then joined Megan in Maamba. Anne Taylor RSC, Convener of the GAP Program, spent time in Roma and then at Chikuni, while Colleen Jackson RSC stayed in Maamba.

Before leaving Zambia Sr Margaret Mary Chilese RSC, Regional Superior asked them to write reflections. Extracts from these give a flavour of what the experience meant to each one, for example, Anne Taylor wrote: It has been amazing to see how strongly Mary Aikenhead's charisma unites our founding congregation and ourselves and the ties between the two have become stronger

WHAT DID THEY DO IN ZAMBIA?

Ros: My work in Chikuni brought me face to face with suffering; the results of poverty and often the impact of HIV/AIDS. The area of the hospital that most touched my heart was maternal and child health. More nurses are involved in immunizing children and the very effective PMTCT program (prevention of mother to child transmission).

Clare: At Roma Girls Primary School, Lusaka mostly working with the little grade two's was an absolute joy. I was quite the novelty amongst the children with someone always stroking my hair or my arms. It is a wonderful thing

that Roma Girls Primary School is able to give children from the nearby compounds the chance to receive a good education. I am going to be studying Primary teaching at University next year, and I will treasure all the precious times I had at Roma.

Becc: Probably one of the best, but most challenging experiences I had was during my stay at Nakambala, when Sr Francisca asked me to work in a Grade 2 class for a few days. The first day was all right. The second day - word had obviously spread that a muzungu was in the class, so I arrived to find 82 kids waiting to be taught their 3 times tables! Unbeknown to me this was because the B class, who are only supposed to come in the afternoons, had decided to join in with the A class. I must say that I do admire Primary school teachers!

Megan: In the afternoons it was really lovely to work with the kids at the Maamba Mine Special School. In particular I will treasure the moments with a remarkable child who is heavily handicapped. Her body puts her at a disadvantage to the rest of her peers however I never once saw her step down from a challenge.

FROM THE PARTICIPANTS LIVING IN COMMUNITIES

Some random comments affirm how positive and life giving the experience was.

Ros: The work of the sisters is absolutely vital in encouraging the status of women in this community. I have especially loved the support and welcome I received from the sisters. From day one I have felt at home.

Clare: Living in the different RSC communities in Roma and Maamba has shown me just how kind, warm hearted

and hospitable people can be. All of the sisters made me feel so included and valued within each community.

Becc: To the sisters that I got the chance to live with, I would like to say a big thank you for all that you did for me - I will never forget your kindness and will always remember how inspiring you all were.

Megan: I can never thank this community enough for all its warmth and smiles because they will stick with me throughout my life.

FROM THE COMPANIONS

Colleen: In short, this has been a graced and sacred time. I thank our good God for the courage and faith of the Australian and Zambian Sisters of Charity in undertaking this GAP journey. I pray in gratitude for the privilege of meeting and coming to know just a little of Zambia and Zambians

Anne: This has truly been a blessed time... at times challenging and confronting with a sense of powerlessness when I see the needs of so many people and I have little ability to respond to them...

What I have found most difficult to deal with is the enormous inequalities-between Australians and Zambians and also between different groups within Zambian society itself. How does it happen? What do I do about it?... Something for me to ponder and to respond to in some way...

On our website you can find much fuller accounts from all of them so check it out.
<http://www.sistersofcharity.org.au>

Margaret Costigan RSC - August 2009

“Blake Cottage”

House of Hospitality, Castlemaine, Victoria

(Reference – Loddon Mallee News Journal,
Issue 28 Winter 2009, pp 15&16).

An article about this relatively new ministry of the Sisters of Charity was written by Sr Maria Cunningham. Here are some excerpts:

“Blake Cottage” offers hospitality for families of offenders. The project arose from research into homelessness which identified offenders without ‘family’ support as being at risk of becoming homeless on release from prison.

A major feature of the service is that we offer hospitality rather than accommodation. The distinction between hospitality and accommodation is based upon the biblical understanding of hospitality as ‘the ability to make another person comfortable in a strange space – ours; or the fine art of having an open soul and a listening heart’.

As neither of us who minister here are counsellors nor therapists, we have had many experiences of extraordinary openness to our readiness to be a “listening heart”.

For many of the valiant women guests, there is an element of trust reinforced by a paucity of adult female company. Whatever the reason, we are humbled to find the adult guests very ready to share with us their fears, hurts and concerns.

Following external reviews, comments such as this one indicate the need of this valued service:

This work....provides a secure, comfortable, well resourced, home-away-from-home for female members and their children... overnight, affordable accommodation ensures families can arrive at the appointed visit times without heavy financial burden – thus making regular family visits more likely, and it is hoped, contributing to the coherence of the family group in the long term.

We thank Srs Maria and Pam for being ‘listening hearts’ for their important ministry and on behalf of all our readers, assure them of our prayers for themselves and all who visit “Blake Cottage”.



Megan Gaffney, Ros Hiser, Sr Anne Taylor RSC, Clare Christie, Sr Colleen Jackson RSC and Becc Hyland at Chikuni Village with Jacinta and her family



At Maamba Sr Colleen Jackson RSC, Megan Gaffney and Clare Christie having drumming lessons with Emmanuel



At Chikuni Cultural Village dancing Tonga style



Sr Colleen Jackson RSC, Sr Anne Taylor RSC, Clare Christie, Ros Hiser, Becc Hyland and Megan Gaffney at Chikuni Cultural Village



Sisters Maria and Pam at home in Blake Cottage

(continued from front page)

the church at its best and we will always be driven by these Gospel values.

Secondly, in every part of our organisation, there is an overriding dedication to the service of the poor and disadvantaged, Mary Aikenhead Ministries will constantly challenge everybody involved in our work to look for new and creative ways to meet this imperative, in the same way that the Sisters have done in the past.

Third, we have the privilege of contributing to the common good through our service to the Australian community. Our responsibility is to ensure that the outcomes of our efforts continue to exude excellence as the hallmark of hospitals, research centres, aged care facilities, colleges and welfare programs that the Sisters have nurtured," Richard Harpham concluded.

Three commissioning and blessing Rituals of the new Trustees took place, the first in Brisbane on 21st July. The Sydney and Melbourne ceremonies, held on 22nd July, marked the symbolically significant day, the 151st anniversary of Mary Aikenhead's death.

Adapted from media releases at St Vincent's and Mater Health Services, Sydney.



Sister Annette Cunliffe, Sister Laureen Dixon and Sister Elizabeth Dodds at the Congregational Offices following the Signing Ceremony for Mary Aikenhead Ministries

St Mary's-All Saints Ex-Students Association Since 1955

The 55th and final Reunion took place on August 30, at All Saints Liverpool for 11am Mass - and was followed by Luncheon at the Liverpool Catholic Club.

Behind this long-standing Association has been a marvellous band of Committee members who have worked so tirelessly for others, in the spirit of the Sisters of Charity.

As a token of gratitude from the Sisters of Charity, a Certificate of Appreciation and small gift was presented to each member of the 2009 Committee from Sister Annette Cunliffe, on behalf of the Congregation.

The continued prayers of the Sisters of Charity are assured for the 2009 Committee and all those who have served on this Committee for the past 54 years.

Sisters of Charity Companions



Sisters of Charity Companions was established in Melbourne and Sydney in 2008. Companions began by inviting men and women who have been associated with the Sisters of Charity through their local parish or ministry to gather and explore ways in which we can continue our association. Several sisters are also in attendance. It is hoped to begin a group in Brisbane soon.

The Sydney Companions group meet about every six weeks on Sunday afternoons from 2-4pm in Liverpool for conversation, spiritual reflection and something to eat. Members come from a number of parishes in the Liverpool and Cabramatta areas as well as Auburn and Castle Hill. Membership has now expanded to include the friends of the original group.

So far the group has explored the life of Mary Aikenhead and various aspects of Ignatian Spirituality including Finding God in all things, and Discernment.

There are two more gatherings planned for 2009, Sundays 18th October and 29th November. New members are always welcome.

Contact the Congregational Office at Bondi Junction for details.
02 9367 1222.



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