



# NEWSLETTER

St Vincent de Paul  
Canterbury Area Council  
Christmas 2023

**From Mike Moore**  
**Christchurch Area President**

Dear Vincentians, Volunteers, Friends, Sponsors and Supporters

Firstly, may I extend to all readers our Christmas greetings and wishing you and your families, an enjoyable and restful Christmas period.

As I did last year, I again must thank all who have willingly volunteered or supported the Society over the past 12-months. Your willingness to support the Society and your hard work has enabled Vinnies to continue operating in difficult times given the significant increases in the cost-of-living. Over the past 6-months, the demand for assistance has seen a 37% increase compared to last year.

Vinnies ability to respond to these needs is only possible due to the generous support of our sponsors and the many who contribute regularly via parish collections / food donations and to all may I say, "a huge thank you" as without this support, we could not achieve what has been accomplished.

It was also great to see our volunteers being thanked and entertained by Vinnies staff at a function held recently - thank you to Polly and Robyn for arranging.

This Christmas edition also features some of our highlights during 2023 plus interesting articles and events such as the Kaiapoi Conference 50-year celebrations, the annual Christmas Grotto appeal, the 'Pink Ribbon' event held to support the NZ Breast Cancer Foundation, plus our Christmas Hampers that enables clients needing food prior to Christmas to experience a little Christmas cheer in the weeks leading up to Christmas,

May I conclude by wishing you and your families, a Blessed and Happy Christmas.

God Bless

**Mike Moore**  
**Area President**



# Vinnies Christmas Grotto

## What a way to finish off the year!



The Grotto has once again brought the spirit of giving to the families who are in need this Christmas. The success of the Grotto relies on the people who are living their faith in action through the work of St. Vincent de Paul. They can be found in the families of our Young Vinnies at schools, their teachers, community organisations and our Conference members, including the Parishes who contributed gifts and their time volunteering throughout the event. A special mention to the North Parish Youth Group who were pivotal in efficiently setting up the Grotto, shifting the gifts from the upstairs storeroom to the hall like Santa's little helpers.

A wide variety of gifts were collected in the hundreds donated by schools, Conferences, community groups and various organizations bringing a smile to over three hundred and seventy children and helped over one hundred and thirty families through the course of the three days. The massive haul allowed for each child to select one big toy, one book, one clothing, two stocking fillers and one soft toy adding to a total of six presents per child. The smiles on the children and parents' faces as they walked out with bags and boxes full of toys were truly heartwarming. After the three days, we still have a good number of gifts left over allowing us to extend assistance to more families especially those that couldn't attend the Grotto for various reasons. Although the Grotto is only a three-day event the blessings continued to benefit children and their families a week later.

**Our gratitude to our volunteers from the Diocese staff right through to our Conference members. Your continued support has made this Grotto a memorable one.**



Christmas  
Blessings

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VINNIES  
YOUTH

# Welfare update

This past year has seen a significant increase in welfare assistance and help needed across Canterbury – doubtless this has been the case with other welfare providers. During the past 12 months, Vinnies has seen a 25-30% increase in need for all our services with food provision being the major item. And sadly, we do not see anything changing in the short term – I’m hoping that the new Government can work some miracles!



On a brighter note, Christmas for many of our clients in Canterbury will have a wee surprise - in the weeks prior to Christmas day, clients receiving a food parcel, will also receive a Christmas Hamper. We have been fortunate to receive some additional funding from the Catholic Bishop of Chch and the Chch City Council which will enable Vinnies to provide a few Christmas goodies plus a food voucher – in addition to the normal food parcel. This initiative will be extended to some 400 clients, and we hope it will provide some Christmas cheer to these people.

# Vinnies Volunteer Christmas Party

A great fun time was had on the first Sunday in December when the annual Vinnies Christmas party was held. Vinnies staff hosted this party by way of a big thank you to all our shop volunteers and our conference members - who are the face of our welfare services.

Santa and Elvis made guest appearances with both entertaining the volunteers and handing out “goodie bags” to the tune of “I can't help falling in love with you”. There was plenty of laughter and chat plus an opportunity for conference members and shop volunteers to be with each other all for the sake of the same mission.

Polly, our Vinnie Retail Store Manager supported by our GM, Robyn put on a well-attended function with delicious food. Please God we can repeat it all again next year.

thank  you



# St Vincent de Paul Kaiapoi celebrates 50 years

With so much going on Saturday 14th October, the NZ Elections, and the Civil Defense alert, many still made it to this event at St Patrick's church, Fuller St, Kaiapoi, to reminisce over those 50 years since 1973. Mayor Dan Gordon opened the celebrations and presented long service certificates to six both retired and current members ranging from 25+ years to 10 years+ years of service.

Ex Vincentian from the early 1990s Marie Swift, and Bill Vink, husband of Bep Vink (dec) cut the Jubilee cake.



SVdP Kaiapoi and Rangiora share a good bond with North Canterbury foodbanks to support those needing assistance. Both our Conferences are aligned and work in conjunction with Satisfy Food Rescue, Kaiapoi Community Services, Salvation Army, Hope Community Trust, and Nicki Carter, Wellbeing Facilitator, and Waimakariri District Council/Civil Defense, to support the community.

Congratulations Vinnies Kaiapoi for 50 years of support to your community!



Our support is not only food provisions, housing support, and advocacy with connection to Budget service, assistance with Work and Income, transport assistance, etc. furniture, and the all-important personal approach, respect and care. The 2+ years of Covid weren't easy for our community or our support organisations. Working together increased our ability to respond to this increased need for help. Many families in North Canterbury are facing the spiraling costs of food, interest rates, petrol, insurance, and trying to make ends meet. Our outreach, helps people to achieve the most basic needs of life, continues after 50 years in Kaiapoi. This is possible through the generosity of our community and willing volunteers following the example of St. Vincent de Paul, by working in a caring and practical manner to promote human dignity and justice through personal contact with those in need.



“...TO SERVE THE POOR  
IS TO GO TO GOD...”

St. Vincent de Paul



# Vinnies support NZ Breast Cancer Foundation

In October, Vinnies Retail supported the NZ Breast Cancer Foundation at a Pink Ribbon Breakfast event held at Larcomb's Vineyard near Rolleston. A Vinnies 'Pop Up Boutique' was a huge hit with people queuing up to purchase the handpicked designer clothes that our Retail Manager Polly and her team had chosen for the event. Items for sale showcased the high-quality standard of clothing that Vinnies consistently sell giving them a strong reputation in the 'Opshop' marketplace.

**Over \$1,500 was raised by Vinnies at the event for our welfare clients and a further \$5,725** was raised by the Pink Ribbon Team through raffles, silent auctions and ticket sales. To watch a short video of the day follow [this link](#).

For future Vinnie events follow our [Facebook Page](#).



Thank you St Vincent de Paul for the very generous donation of the bike.”

The bike has been given to one of our Year 8 students who is very grateful and is a deserving recipient of the bike. Currently, he does not have a bike and he is excited at the prospect of riding to school.

Ngā mihi  
David O'Neill  
Principal/Tumuaki



# Best Wishes Olivia and THANK YOU!

Sadly, during November 2023, our Young Vinnies / Young Adults Coordinator – Olivia Shimasaki – completed her final day at Vinnies. Olivia has taken up a position at the University of Canterbury. Whilst she will be a huge loss to the Society, we also acknowledge that we have been very fortunate to have someone with her skills and talents.

During her time at Vinnies, Olivia through her efforts, has engaged effectively with our Catholic Schools and several non-Catholic schools. Achievements during 2023, because of her work, resulted in students volunteering in our shops, bagging firewood, cooking food at the Soup Kitchens and at Kai for the Community. Olivia also set up a team to provide food for our tertiary students in Canterbury.

In addition, there were projects such as the Can Drive, Winter Woollies and recently, the Christmas Grotto appeal that contributed remarkably to our mission.

**Olivia's work was most successful, and we sincerely thank her for her dedication. She also provided inspiration to our young people here in Canterbury. Good luck Olivia in your future endeavours!**



**Olivia receiving applause after 2023 Commissioning Mass**

## A Christmas Message From our GM – Robyn Casey

Seasons Greetings to you all. This year for all the wrong reasons we are hitting new record levels in welfare for the calendar year to end of November where we have helped and closed 7902 cases, 773 cases past the end of year figure last year with one month to go. This will be reflective of the economy and cost of living. What it also means is we have been very busy in a challenging environment. Next year I can't see this environment improving, but with the grace of God I pray it won't get worse. In my Santa sack I wish for more money, food, and homewares to fulfill the needs anticipated next year.

To our Conference members, volunteers, and staff you have worked hard this year and I thank you all very much. To all our donors whether it be food, homeware or financial – thank you very much, it is very much appreciated.

Seasons Greetings to you all – May 2024 be a good year for everyone, to those travelling, travel safe. God Bless.



# Highlights of 2023

As I reflect back over the past year, I realised there have been many highlights some of which include:

- The blessing and opening of the Ozanam Apartments by Bishop Michael earlier in the year. Today, these 7 units are fully occupied by young families and are managed and supported with wrap around services by the staff of St John of God (Hauora Trust). Thank you again to all the donors who have made this initiative possible.
- A visitation to the tomb of St Vincent de Paul in late May was another highlight. This was in a reliquary above the altar in the Chapel dedicated to St Vincent de Paul.
- Our annual Commissioning Mass for new Vincentians was held at St Marys Pro-Cathedral in late June. The event - presided over by Bishop Michael - saw a very full church and it was heartening to see the commissioning of 18 new Conference members and some 200 new Young Vinnies that represented 18 schools in Canterbury.
- Our Festival day in September was hosted by the Beckenham Conference & had a very good programme that was appreciated by a great turnout of Vincentians.
- The Kaiapoi Conference celebrated its 50th anniversary In October with Mayor Dan Gordon opening the celebrations and presented long-service certificates to six past & current members.
- Recognition of some of our long serving volunteers occurred at our Festival day with Peter Dravitski (over 50 years), Tony Fahey, George Varghese and Tim O'Sullivan (all 25 or more years) receiving the Vincentian "Works of Mercy Cross." Earlier in the year, Trish O'Keefe (33 years) was also recognised for her great work as Secretary for the Canterbury Area Council and Board.



Bishop Michael cutting the ribbon to formally open the Ozanam Apartments



Bishop Michael with Ozanam Trust Board Members Mike Daly (SVDP) and Sarah Hillier (St John of God Hauora Trust)



The reliquary above the altar containing the remains of St Vincent de Paul



Our Young Vinnies plus a number of Adults at our Commissioning Mass with Bishop Michael in June 2023.



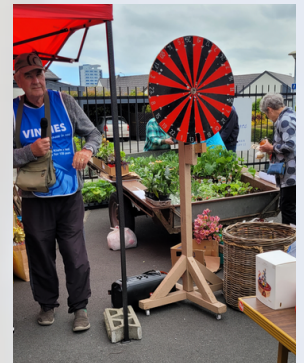
Some of our volunteers celebrating "Volunteer Week"

# Catholic Cathedral Parish Twilight Gala

Cathedral Conference was invited to have a stall at this Gala on Tuesday 5th December. Our Conference member Maurice Lawlor enthusiastically led a small team from our Conference to ensure this was very successful evening. The organising team were fortunate to receive generous support for the white elephant stall with a wide range of donated items including a trailer load of plants, hams, a beautiful bunch of flowers, delicious cakes baked by Parishioners and St Vincent De Paul members, some clothing from Stanmore Road store and lovely Christmas decorations. Several local businesses also got behind the St Vincent De Paul stall with many generous donations.

Despite the weather being a bit cold, we had a very successful evening and raised \$1,380.70. St Vincent De Paul's presence at this event certainly raised the visibility of the great work we do in the wider community and strengthened the relationship with the parish which will hopefully result in more volunteers for our very important work.

Thank you so very much to all who made this evening such a success.



## Obituary notice Eleanor Corston

Eleanor was a long term and active parishioner of Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish in Sumner and died peacefully at Holly Lea Hospital on Thursday, September 28, 2023, aged 83 years.

She joined the Stella Maris SVDP Conference in 2017 and helped with weekly food parcel delivery and attended the monthly conference meetings. She retired from Vinnies mid 2020 when she had a decline in health

Eleanor had worked in Real Estate until she was 80 - an amazing effort. She later moved to a retirement village and was enjoying the lifestyle of the complex.

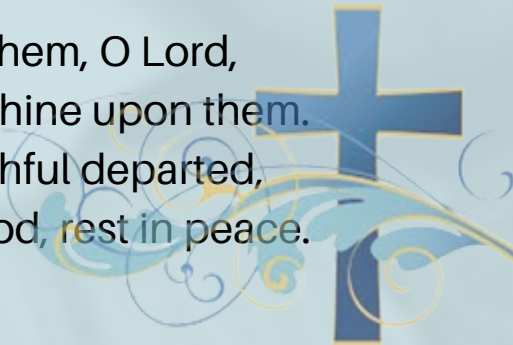
Eleanor is survived by her four adult children. A loved grandmother and great grandmother. A Celebration of Eleanor's life was held on Friday, 6th October 2023.

*For all our fellow Vincentians, who were laid to rest in 2023*

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord,  
and let perpetual light shine upon them.

May the souls of the faithful departed,  
through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

**Amen**



**Blessing**

As we go on our way, May God go with us. May he go  
before us to show the way, Behind us to encourage, beside  
us to befriend, above to watch over,  
And within to give us his peace. Amen