



# NEWSLETTER

St Vincent de Paul  
Canterbury Area Council  
Easter 2026



**From Bill Manning  
Christchurch Area President**

**Dear Vincentians, Volunteers, Friends, Sponsors and Supporters  
Happy Easter!**

It has been a busy start to the year here in the Canterbury Area, with a couple of milestones reached. Firstly we set up and opened the new Vinnies Concept Store in Manchester Street. This was the culmination of two years of planning and a lot of hard work. For me it was an absolute pleasure to work alongside our Business and Operations Manager, Polly Fisher and many volunteers who generously gave their time to bring this from a plan to reality. The shop is not just a shop, but a place where we can offer outreach services. We have partnered with Kai for the Community who operate from the rear of the shop to offer meals to the homeless on a Sunday night.

We have also replaced our truck with a newer model Fuso. This has been planned for some time and February saw that plan realised. Feedback from our logistics people is that it is great to operate.

February also saw a trip by Polly and myself to meet with the Conference Presidents in Ashburton, Temuka, Timaru and Waimate. With the amalgamation of Christchurch and Mid/South Canterbury Area Councils last year, we undertook the trip to see how we could work better together. We also visited the Ashburton and Timaru shops to meet with the shop managers and exchange ideas of what might work well. We have another visit planned in April, and plan to get the shop managers across the new Area Council together to develop a 'retail strategy' and look at how we can work better together in the near future.

Finally, a big thank you to all our volunteers both in our Vinnies shops and also working for their local Conferences! Vinnies could not operate and deliver on our mission without your very significant contribution. Many thanks!

Bill Manning - Area President



# From our Business and Operations Manager

## Nga mihi nui ki a koutou katoa

What a fantastic start to the year!

Vinnies is proud to announce the opening of our new store at 35 Manchester Street, in partnership with Kai for the Community. Our store was officially opened on 5th February 2026 with an excellent crowd of supporters present. The building was blessed by **Bishop Michael** and the ribbon was cut by our **Mayor (Phil Mauger)** and **Deputy Mayor (Victoria Henstock)**. Vinnies are extremely grateful to all three for their presence!

Our new concept store offers a wide range of goods for everyone — from designer clothing to \$1 linen, as well as books and bric-a-brac. Vinnies have also collaborated with Kai for the Community meaning that we can reach and support even more people in need. It also means that Kai for the Community now has a permanent space to continue their incredible work feeding those in our community, while Vinnies can assist people with essential items such as clothing and bedding.

As the cooler months approach and the cost of living continues to rise, we are seeing increasing demand for welfare support. This places additional pressure on our welfare resources, but it also strengthens our commitment to serving our community.

Looking ahead to the year, we sincerely thank all our volunteers for their unwavering dedication and support. Your generosity and time make it possible for us to continue helping those who need it most.



## Nga Mihi mahana - Polly Fisher - Business and Operations Manager

### PRAYER FOR WORLD PEACE

O Lord God. We pray for peace & love, in all the nations, among all the people that all wars & hatred will end. We pray for those who suffer from war, injustice & intolerance for the children and young people, the poor & neglected ones. We pray for peace in our life, lands, nations, families & in our hearts. Lord give us world peace. We ask your mercy in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen



# Report of Regional Representative

– Brian Hutching

The 2026 SVdP conference year is officially underway! As your Regional Representative, I am in regular communication with all conferences and recently shared your feedback at the February National Board meeting. The following is a summary from the Regional Representative's perspective of the end of 2025.

The final Board meeting of 2025 was cancelled to prioritise the National Council meeting on 8th November. A primary focus remains the Refounding initiative, with many Conferences now actively implementing a more prayerful, spiritually-led approach inspired by Blessed Frédéric Ozanam.

To support this, members are encouraged to utilise the "Turning Point" booklet and other resources available on the SVdP website.

## National Update: November 2025

Operational progress continues with Edmund Cuevas, the new Health and Safety Officer, outlining updates for the Society. In the retail sector, the Wellington shops pilot is now operational, and the National President is considering a part-time National Retail Advisor to provide expert guidance. Carol Zillonis's Youth Report highlights new initiatives to engage young people, while the Twinning report stresses the vital importance of maintaining regular contact with our twinned conferences. Together, these developments ensure we remain a modern, mission-focused organisation dedicated to those we serve.

I attended the National Board Meeting in Wellington on 13th February 2026. This was the first Board meeting of the year. I took messages and concerns from our conferences to the meeting. These were taken as read because of the full agenda. However, I was informed that the messages had been read, including the message from the West Coast about bank accounts

Finally, some personal thoughts about how I see our way forward:

The Society is embarking on a transformative journey, "Beyond Charity," moving from micro-level assistance toward macro-level structural change. This new mandate encourages us to "put our heads above the parapet" to challenge prejudice and inequality, bolstered by a strengthened partnership with Caritas for social justice advocacy. To ensure this mission thrives, the Refounding process will be led by Regional Representatives and Presidents serving as local "Champions." This includes auditing traditional meeting times to remove barriers for young parents and preserving our "personal whanau contact" model against a cold, agency-style approach.

I am looking forward to attending the SVdP 2026 AGM to be held in Nelson over the weekend of 27-29th March. I hope to establish new links with other conferences in New Zealand as well as reinforcing links already made.

"Charity is the Samaritan who pours oil on the wounds of the traveller who has been attacked. But it is justice's role to prevent the attacks."

— Blessed Frédéric Ozanam



# Myra Barry

## Awarded the Medal Benemerenti by Pope Leo

Prior to Christmas 2025 at St Gregory's Parish Church Myra Barry was presented with a Papal Honour, the Medal Benemerenti, awarded to her by Pope Leo. This honour is in recognition of her faithful, dedicated, and humble service in her parishes, diocese, St Vincent de Paul and wider community over many years.

Those of you who know Myra will know something of the extraordinary work Myra has done fostering children, and involved with many diocesan and parish groups and committees over the years. Working often in conjunction with her husband Kevin, who has since died, she has been a source of compassion and commitment to people in the church and those who struggle in our society.



On the 21<sup>st</sup> December Myra was presented with this Papal Honour. Congratulations to Myra for her exceptional and faithful service to the Church and the wider community

***Congratulations Myra!***

## Vinnies, Canterbury would like to extend our thanks to the Elms Hotel in Papanui

... for their generous donations of furniture and bedding! **Manager, Polly Fisher** acknowledged these donations and explained how these beds have gratefully been received by our ever-growing number of welfare clients who are struggling to furnish their homes.

The recent donation of bedding from the Hotel Elms has enabled Vinnies to provide warmth to people in need. Polly thanked **General Manager, Anthony Moore**, for their ongoing contribution to our mission and helping those in need bringing dignity to people's lives.



<http://www.hotelelms.co.nz/>

# WELCOME

## To our new Conference Coordinator



Canterbury Area President (Bill Manning) is pleased to announce that Phil Bell has been appointed as our new Conference Coordinator. It is a role that will see Phil supporting our Conference Presidents & members across the region – helping strengthen communication, formation, recruitment and the ongoing “Refounding” in the Society.

Phil comments *‘I have long admired the quiet, faithful work of Vincentians – visiting, listening, and walking alongside people doing it tough!’*

I see this role as one of service, supporting those who serve and helping ensure that the Society remains strong, connected and mission-focussed for the next generation.

It’s a part time role and I will also continue in my Tartan Landscapes business.

## Keith Norton retires as Oceania Zone Controller

Keith joined Vinnies in 1975 after some prompting from his dad who happened to be the Conference President at the Cathedral Conference in Chch – that’s an amazing 51 years’ service!

Keith enjoyed helping the Pacific nations and was asked to help organise the Oceania Conference at Lincoln in 2007. It was not long after this - in 2010 - that Keith was asked to take on the role of Oceania Zone Controller where he became responsible for 11 Countries – a huge workload.

Keith has visited the following countries – PNG, Bougainville, Solomon Ids, Fiji, Samoa, Federated States of Micronesia, Vanuatu, Kiribati and Tonga.

Keith’s ability to engage people across cultures, to deflect conflict with calmness and firm but gentle determination, meant that countries with very diverse cultures, education levels, wealth and infrastructure, could come together and feel strongly part of one worldwide Society under the Vincentian banner. Thank you Keith for your amazing contribution!

Keith passed the baton over to Mike Moore in mid-January who knows that he has big shoes to fill!



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

St. Vincent de Paul



# Young Hearts in Action



## A Promising Start for Young Vinnies in 2026

Young Vinnies has continued to grow in 2026 across Canterbury, with a strong presence in Mid and South Canterbury and encouraging engagement from students, schools, and local Conferences. School visits have been a particular highlight, with young people showing genuine enthusiasm for learning about service and putting compassion into action in their communities.

This term, the focus is on the Lenten Food Appeal, with students collecting food donations to support families in need. Through workshops, presentations, and ongoing support, students are discovering that even small acts of kindness can make a meaningful difference. It has been inspiring to see them stepping forward with new ideas for outreach, fundraising, and practical service, demonstrating a heartfelt desire to help those in need.

A key part of this momentum has been the ongoing encouragement and support from our Conference members, who generously share their time, experience, and heart for service with our young people. Their presence strengthens the connection between school initiatives and the wider community, reminding students that they are part of a much larger mission of care and solidarity. Together, this collaboration between schools, Conferences, and the wider Vinnies network is helping to nurture a new generation of compassionate leaders, ready to serve and make a positive difference wherever they are.



# Our Shop Managers

## Papanui, Richmond and Ashburton



### **Retail Manager, Canterbury**

Hi, my name is Kate Dowman, and I am the new Retail Manager based at our Papanui store in Christchurch.

I have two adult children and live on a lifestyle block in Prebbleton.

Being of service to the community through fashion and retail is why this role fills my cup up every day, not to mention the extraordinary volunteers and Vinnies staff that I get to work with. I am blessed!

### **Stanmore Rd Shop Manager**

My name is Teresa and I am the Shop Manager at Stanmore Rd in Richmond. I have been involved with Vinnies for over 8-years starting as a volunteer and now work full time in this role.

Teresa loves her work, loves the culture of Vinnies and loves being able to help others.

As a result of being involved with the Society of St Vincent de Paul, Teresa says that she has grown in her faith and her personal journey with God. She became a Catholic four years ago after going through RCIA.

*We give thanks for people like Teresa and love hearing stories about how support from Vinnies can help change the lives of people.*



### **Ashburton Shop Manager**

My name is Donna Collins and I am the Shop Manager at Ashburton.

I am a mother of 3 adult children, and was a stay at home mother for 17 years volunteering as part of the Kindy & School Committees. I was asked to join the Ashburton Conference of St Vincent de Paul Society.

My role started in January 2015 just before we moved out of Victoria Street to the old classrooms at the church for our rebuild. And some 12 years later, on I am still loving it.



### **Ashburton Shop report**

The Ashburton shop has had a great start to the year with shop sales up 32% on January 2025 sales. Our customer numbers are on average 150 per week day and 75 on a Saturday. Our shop volunteer numbers are about 40 with about 8 staff working each day.

Our clothes sell between free for baby size, \$0.50c for children size, most adult clothing is \$2, with items with tags anything up to \$25. We sell most things including beds, furniture, electrical goods, household items and garden tools.

A member of our Conference lists some of our items on Trade Me, bringing in an extra \$3,000+ per year. This venture all started back in February 2017 when a small metal relic of Pope Pius X was sold.

A few weeks after that item sold, the member who looks after Trade Me, was in the shop collecting the next lot of items that the staff had put aside for him, when he spotted a toast rack in the rubbish bin - it was in the bin because it had not sold even though it was only priced at \$0.50c. He put the toast rack on Trade Me where it sold for \$5. We now give all our toast racks to him and to date we have sold about 60!



## Ashburton Conference update

### YOUTH

Early in the New Year, with the help of Cyrene, we re-introduced the Young Vinnies programme that was suspended during Covid. We started with the two Catholic schools (Ashburton and Methven), the Christian School and one state school, Hampstead.

The Christian school allows us to bring in a secondary aspect.

### SHOP

Our shop is performing very well, with good managers and a great team of volunteers, as well as another team involved with moving furniture. There is a large amount of stock constantly arriving. Income remains high and the shop consistently receives good Google reviews. Parking in the area for both customers and staff is becoming an issue.

### ST PETER'S CENTRE

- Our vans are stored at the centre and much of the original church building is used for storage of food and furniture waiting to go to the shop. Because Food Rescue Aoraki gives us a weekly donation of food we have allowed them to run their Ashburton operation from there two days a week, supplying several food banks in town.
- The family harm victim's flat in the building is being operated on our behalf by a social worker from He Waka Tapu and has had some women and children in residence recently.

### CHRISTMAS IN ASHBURTON

- The Ashburton Guardian's Annual Centre's Little Helper Project saw some members dressed as Santa and approach many businesses to receive donations of toys to give out at Christmas.

### COMING EVENTS

- We will be holding our annual dinner at the RSA soon to acknowledge the hard work of our shop volunteers and our members and associate members.
- The Salvation Army run a community food bank, but are only open 3 days a week, Presbyterian support give out a little food, but by far St Vincent de Paul would be the busiest Food Bank in Mid-Canterbury.

**Trevor Wall**  
Conference President

# Pathways to Employment in Timaru

## by Nola Hill

Early in 2024, I became aware of the need in our community to provide 'at risk youth' with a pathway to avoid the dole queue.

We all know that some students leave high school with no qualifications or skills. These youngsters may have found that they just did not fit into the standard education system or there may have been social factors in their lives that led to their predicament.

I had heard that the YMCA had some programmes available to help these young people so I went to visit our local branch. The **'Skills for Life'** program offered opportunities for students to improve their reading and writing and math's skills, as well as classes in budgeting, cooking, computer skills, CV and letter writing, how to fill in forms for job applications and a course to achieve ones Learner Driver's Licence. The fringe benefit of these programs is the sense of belonging and self-worth achieved by the individual.

The programs are State funded if the applicant meets the criteria set out. Often this is age related or is only offered to people already receiving support from WINZ.

After talking with Keith Shaw, Chief Executive Officer, it became very obvious that one of the most important requirements for young job seekers was a driver's licence. Keith explained that some students needed more driving lessons than others while some needed help with the written part of the test. Many students also needed to grow their confidence as their self-esteem could sometimes be almost non-existent.

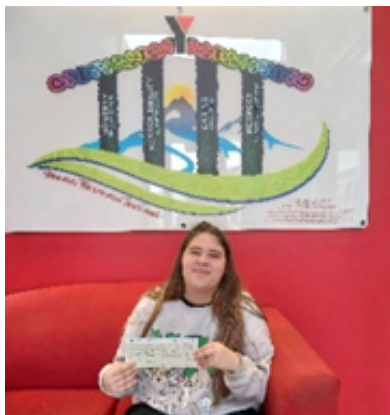
At our next Conference meeting in Timaru, I told the members about my time spent at the YMCA and how they offered these opportunities to our local youth. I explained that there were many youngsters in Timaru who did not meet the criteria for Government funding and so "fell through the cracks" because they would not be able to pay the fees. After an animated discussion our members decided we would support some of these young people to achieve their Learners Drivers Licence. Our members voted to make \$5,000 available to this cause. By October 2024 we had assisted 18 people to achieve their Drivers Licence.

**At our first conference meeting in 2025 our members voted to support the Drive2Work program with a further \$5,000. We keep in contact with Keith Shaw who is so grateful for our interest and support.**



## Y-Drive Driver Licence Success Stories

**Thank you to St Vincent de Paul for your support of and belief in us...**



**Ashley** was one of the students who first signed up for this course. However, when lessons started she said she was supported elsewhere. I didn't think she would be my last student to achieve this goal this year. She ended up changing her mind in the beginning of Term 3 and she stuck with me till she achieved this milestone. Ashley is someone special to me. She is very emotional; when she is happy or when sad, she cries. When she was prepping for her test, she cried. Even though she achieved good marks when she got her licence, same thing, she cried. Way to go Ashley. You got this!

**Thomas** was committed to lessons, very eager, always on time and probably the overall most outstanding and full of confidence of their class. Well done, Thomas.



**Blake** signed up before he came through education. We utilised the driver scholarship funding to support Blake to get his driver licence. Well done, Blake. The world is at your feet, and I know you'll make great choices.



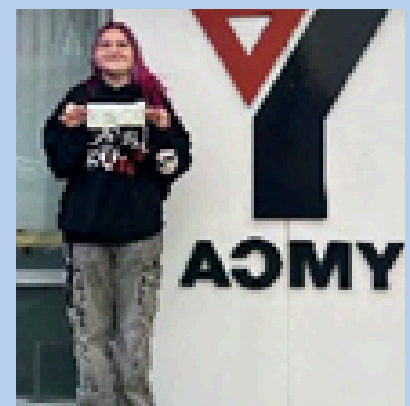
**Meet Harley** – he has a lot of self-doubt and doesn't believe he can get a driver licence. Before leaving the house this morning he told his mom he would fail his test. Harley passed with a score of 34/35. Harley – the sky is the limit and the world is your oyster. I can't wait to watch your journey in whatever you do. All the best.

**Meet Ava**, she is very shy person and keeps to herself. I first met Ava during school break. Logan the education tutor mentioned that Ava would like to get her licence and will be enrolling with the Y for Term 3. She came to every lesson and once she was confident to take the test, we booked her in. Ava lacks self-confidence hence why I couldn't convince her to take a photo with her licence.



**Ely** passed his theory test and failed his eyesight test. Ely explained his situation, I called his mom who said Ely has had eye surgeries in the past and should've taken his glasses on the day of his test. The Mum explains doing another eyesight for \$60 is not something she was willing to pay. I called my manager and explained the situation, she advised to book an eyesight test through Cannon St Optometrist and the Y would meet the cost. We booked and supported Ely at his appointment and got an eyesight certificate. Whilst dropping Ely home after the appointment he shared to me that he is one of six children, mum works all the time and out of the six people living at home he is the third and the youngest one to have a driver licence. He was stoked and couldn't wait to get his licence the next day. He was very polite and thankful to the Y for making this happen for him.

**Jada** had a fear of sitting the theory test and failing was what stopped her. We managed to get her to work hard and to understand that failure is not something we don't encounter every day. She wanted a reader/writer at AA, but I encouraged her to take the test. To my surprise, after waiting for only ten minutes she passed her theory test with 33/35. If it wasn't for Y, she doesn't think she would ever have achieved this milestone. She is so stoked and can't wait to drive. She couldn't wait to get home and show mum her licence. Go Jada! Believe in yourself and never tell yourself you can't do anything in life.

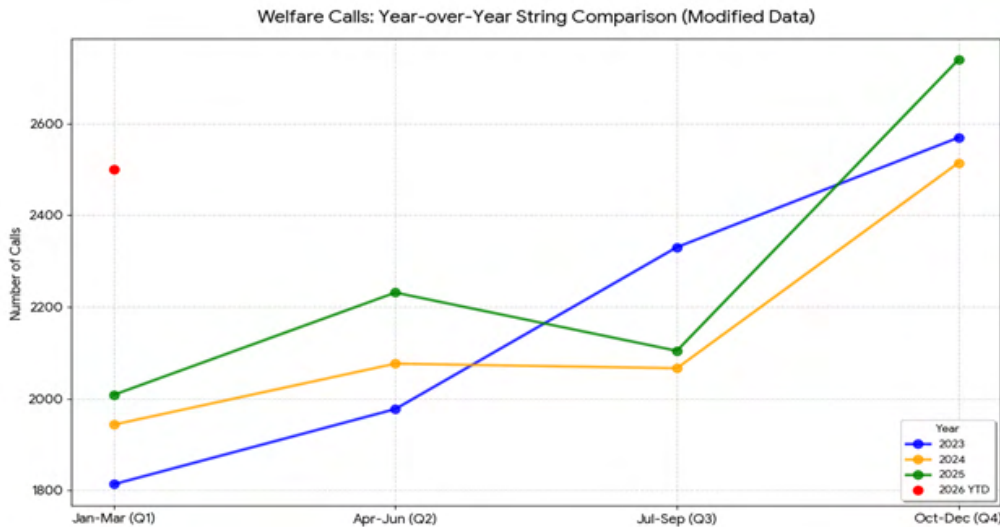


# WELFARE CANTERBURY

## ... a simple analysis

Our mission at Vinnies is to support those who are in need irrespective of their culture, faith or social status. Thank you to all our volunteers and to the generosity of the community for their donations. Vinnies can only achieve the "mission" because of this generosity!

### Graph 1



In **Graph 1** you can see that in 2023, Vinnies received 8,700 calls (blue line) and continued at this level (8,600) into 2024 (yellow line). In 2025 (green line), demand from the community continued to grow to over 9,000 calls.

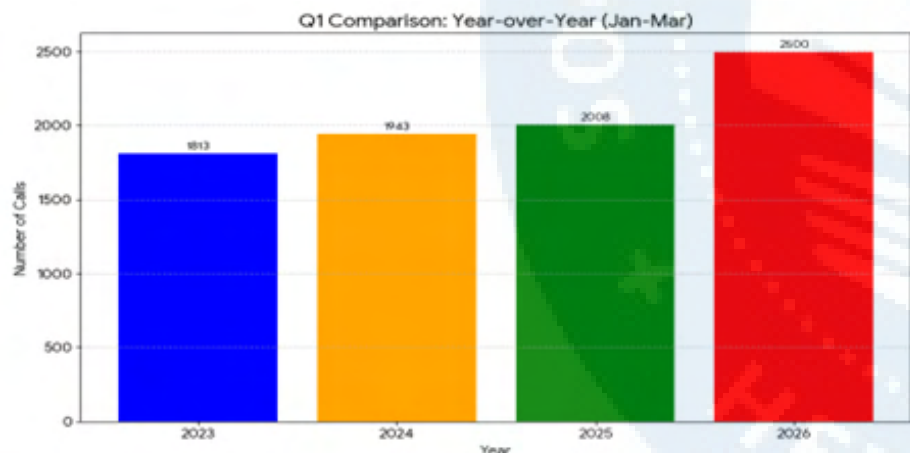
*Who can see the red dot in graph 1?*

This represents where demand is in the 3-months to March 2026.

In Graph 2, you can see the red column showing how the need from the community has increased. This graph compares the 3-month period between January-March for 2023 – 2026.

The red column showing for the first 3-months of 2026 can be analysed further by the type of request received.

### Graph 2



Of the 2,500 calls (forecast as 2-weeks till the end of the quarter) demand for food parcels represents 77% of the calls. The other 23% of calls include 151 calls for furniture & bedding, Outreach services (Power & Internet, School Uniforms, Shoes & Chrome books) = 60, Clothing = 46 plus Budget Advice = 25.

# Obituaries

## Raymond John Rochford (“Mickey”)

22 April 1940 – 22 January 2026

Ray became a member of the Kaiapoi SVdP Conference in April 2008 and was appointed President the following month, a role he held until September 2012. His time in this position came to an end after the Christchurch earthquakes, when the family home in Sewell Street was red-zoned.

At Ray’s funeral at Our Lady of Victories on 27 January 2026, officiated by Fr Michael Pui, Fr Michael commented in his sermon that Ray had “stalked” him. Fr Michael had been Parish Priest in Kaiapoi prior to the earthquakes, and “Superman” Ray was very much his right-hand man—helping with the grounds, maintenance and upkeep, and in fact anything Fr Michael needed done. When Fr Michael was transferred to Riccarton, Ray and Lois duly followed, as that was where they found suitable land on which to rebuild.

Ray was a deeply faithful and devoted Catholic and a loving family man. He leaves behind three sons, nine grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren. Known within his family as “Mickey,” Ray was a positive, hardworking man—amicable with everyone he met and a friend to many. His generous nature and positive influence left a lasting mark on all who knew him. Ray was very much a “do-er.” His monthly SVdP meetings were kept to a maximum of one hour, with everything straight to the point—efficient, practical, and purposeful, just like Ray himself. His funeral was well attended by some 300 with many from the West Coast where both Ray and Lois were born.



**Let us pray for past members of the St Vincent de Paul Society who have died recently.**

*For all our fellow Vincentians.  
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