



# NEWSLETTER

St Vincent de Paul  
Canterbury Area Council  
Christmas 2024



**From Mike Moore – Christchurch Area President**

**Dear Vincentians, Volunteers, Friends, Sponsors and Supporters**

As I write this 'intro' for our Christmas Newsletter, I am aware that it is now 4 weeks till we celebrate Christmas day. While most of us will enjoy Christmas festivities of some kind, there will be families that won't be able to. To help make a difference, Vinnies is holding a Christmas Grotto where children under the age of 17 years are able to receive a Christmas gift. The Grotto is being held on 7th - 8th December. Vinnies also has a white elephant stall at the Cathedral Parish's Christmas Twilight Market on 3rd December. This is at St Marys Pro-Cathedral in Manchester St. Vinnies is also topping-up some of our food parcels that are delivered close to Christmas with an extra voucher. If you would like to help donate towards our Christmas welfare activities, you can donate at:

**[www.svdpcanterbury/donations](http://www.svdpcanterbury/donations)**

This Christmas edition of our newsletter features several interesting articles including the recent refugee programme managed by our Selwyn Conference, a report on our 'Festival Day' held at the new facilities of Marian College. St John of God (Waipuna) also report on progress at the Ozanam Apartments. All of this, plus more!

A new governance structure of the Society has resulted in Brian Hutching (Cathedral Conference) being elected to the Regional Representative role for the Canterbury Region. He will be a part of the National Board.

May I recognise all the supporters of Vinnies - we are indebted to you and thank you for your very generous support. This enables Vinnies to undertake an ever-increasing workload supporting families - so please be assured that your donations are making a difference to people's lives!

And to all our members who assist in so many ways plus all who volunteer in our shops and sorting areas - a big thank you to all for your time, your generosity and your hard work. We are indebted to each of you!

May I wish everyone a very happy and enjoyable Christmas with family and friends. If you are holidaying, travel safely and enjoy your break.

God Bless

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





# Festival Day 2024

Marian College was the venue for our annual Festival Day in 2024 with over 80 Vincentians being present. The event – MC'd by our Young Vinnies Coordinator, Cyrene Tionko, has been described by many as inspiring given the excellent presentations during the day and the top-class facilities at the college's amazing new building.

Proceedings commenced with Mass being celebrated by Fr Chris Orr in the beautiful chapel of the college with music by Liz Mulholland who ensured our singing was of the highest order. After morning tea, Fr Chris provided those present with a very thoughtful spiritual reflection that had three themes: "Seeing the face of Christ in the poor; Be evangelised by the poor and Evangelise the poor." He concluded with comment: Be grateful for what God does for us."

Elizabeth Owens (President, Nelson Area Council) spoke on how we might make our meetings more interesting through leadership, team building, making our prayers more uplifting, changing meeting venues, guest speakers and sharing the mahi! Certainly, much food for thought by our Conferences.

Mike Daly facilitated an important session on 'Membership.' Maurice Lawlor was first up and spoke via a video, on the steps that Conferences must take if they wish to hold a successful recruitment plan. This was then followed by very thoughtful presentations by Jenny Carter (Rangiora President) and Ian Tennant (former Selwyn President).

After an enjoyable luncheon, our National President (Gerry Stevens) emphasised how important were our Conference members and thanked them for their work for the Society in Canterbury. He also emphasised the importance of our spirituality when delivering food parcels – see the face of Jesus in the poor!



Guest speaker from Catholic Social Services (Luis Arevalo) spoke about the importance of Advocacy for those in need and the importance of counselling for the depressed - including anger management and grief. This was followed by a thought-provoking session provided by Bruce Mayhew who asked the question "why am I a Vincentian?" A series of short video clips followed from Vincentians around the world that provided some inspirational responses.





Myola Mendonca and Robyn Casey then responded to some of the most frequently asked questions on Welfare matters by Conference members.

Cyrene Tionko outlined his work as the Young Vinnies / Young Adult Co-ordinator and outlined his achievements over the past year and his action plan for the coming year.

The day was rounded off with Area President (Mike Moore) summarising the achievements of the past year and his goals for the next three years. He also thanked our guests for their attendance including Gerry Stevens, Luis Arevalo, Elizabeth Owens, Anne-Marie McCartan (NEO), Julie Hands (West Coast) and Keith Norton (Oceania Rep).



Finally, a big "thank you" to Bruce Mayhew and all the amazing team from the Cathedral Conference that hosted the occasion. The event took a lot of organisation and considerable effort on the day – so from all attendees, our grateful appreciation to all who volunteered that made for an outstanding day!



*Thank you Bruce Mayhew and Cathedral Conference  
– a great day and an awesome venue!*

## Important Dates to remember

### 1. Our Welfare Line:

- The Welfare line closes for 2024 on Thursday 19th December at 4pm – this will enable our Vincentians to complete their deliveries several days prior to Christmas day.
- The Welfare Line will re-open for 2025 on Thursday 16th January.

### 2. Our Retail Shops:

- All shops will close for 2024 on Monday 23rd December at 4pm.
  - In 2025, our shops will re-open as follows:
    - Papanui and Hornby shops will reopen on Saturday 4th January 2025 between 10am -3pm
    - Stanmore Rd shop will reopen on Monday 6th January 2025 at 9am.
- All our shops will be fully restocked for our opening day sales!

### 3. The Christmas Twilight Market

- Being held on 3rd December (5-7.30pm) at St Mary's Pro Cathedral, Manchester St

### 4. Children's Christmas Grotto

- Being held on 7-8th December between 10am -3pm at the Diocesan Offices, 122 Barbadoes St

**Thank you Shelley!**

A sincere thank you to Shelley Knowles who has concluded her time at Vinnies as our Conference Coordinator. Many will recall her talents, and the excellent work Shelley did with the Conferences and our members.  
Shelley – we wish you all the best for your future.



# Nau mai, haere mai - Welcome!

## A Journey to a Free Society – by Ian Tennant

Our Selwyn Conference of St Vincent de Paul in Canterbury began operating in 2021. In mid-2022 we were asked to become sponsors of a Community Refugee Sponsorship programme (CORS) and sponsor an Afghan refugee, at that time located in Pakistan. By November '22 we were registered CORS sponsors and able to nominate a refugee we would support. We owe a large debt to St Joseph's Conference in New Plymouth for their invaluable help in getting registered.

We began communications with the man who was seeking a new life for himself and then, later, his family. He was seeking a life in New Zealand, free from Taliban threats to his existence, and for the chance for his children, especially his two daughters, to grow up in a free society, where they could be educated and be free to choose their futures. This was something now denied them after the Taliban took power in their home country. The immigration process took a long time, but, in the meantime, a change in government policy meant his family could accompany him. This increased our commitment dramatically from looking after the resettlement of one individual to that of a family of eight.



Family At Willowbank recently



Trip to Sumner seaside. First time they had ever seen the sea (2nd week in NZ)



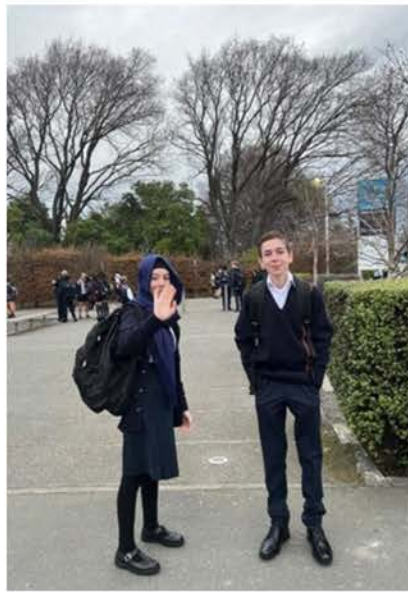
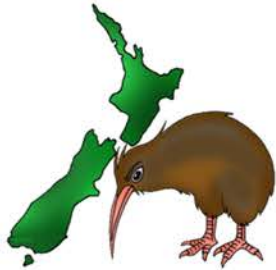
Parents at Akaroa recently

The family finally arrived on 30th June 2024 at the start of a miserable winter week in Christchurch. Emergency funds were handed over, cell phones provided, and suitable clothing bought. These were followed by supervised self-drive excursions to ensure familiarity with NZ road rules. By the end of the first week temporary accommodation was located, with a lot of associated drama and 3 days of hard work by a wonderful Vinnies team, to make the accommodation liveable.

The resettlement process began the day after they arrived, and within the week the parents had bank accounts, IRD numbers, and full MSD benefits. Orientation began with a trip into the city centre to the Botanical Gardens, followed a couple of days later with a trip to the seaside at Sumner, which was the first time they had seen the sea. A very emotional and heartwarming event for me. A few weeks later we were able to obtain more permanent rental accommodation and in the meantime, the children had all been enrolled in school, medical and dental centres, as well as having been given Metro passes and a couple of familiarisation trips to a local mall.



A couple of months on from this, the family are happy, settled and establishing links with their local community. The children are thriving at the local schools, and we can now take pause to reflect on the journey so far.



Eldest children off to high school at start of term3



Young daughter able to go to school term3

There have been many wonderful things that have come from this: the knowledge we have contributed greatly to improving the quality of life for this family; the bond of friendship that has strengthened our membership as we worked towards the common goal of making this family welcome; the humbling level of generosity from both our parishioners and the wider Christian community, especially the Hope Church in Rolleston; the realisation that we have so much to be grateful for in New Zealand and how great the need is for our assistance to the rest of the world. Lastly, for me personally, the realisation I have done something really worthwhile and life altering, not only for this family we have supported, but also for myself.

I look forward to the remains of our two-year commitment in this resettlement process with confidence and with gratitude for having been given this opportunity to make a small difference in the world.

Ian Tennant – CORS team leader, St Vincent de Paul, Selwyn.



Some of the wonderful crew who helped with the clean up and shift in



VINNIES truck did the shift of all donated goods from storage

Heartwarming story Ian & the Selwyn Conference!



# The Ozanam Apartments, Pavitt St

## – what's happening with the young mothers

Kath Prins (St John of God (Waipuna) interviewed one of our young mum's following her experience at Ozanam Apartments. Here is her story (name changed).

Ella came to the Ozanam Apartments from emergency housing. Ella said she "felt really excited for me and my daughter because it was a really nice house." Having a warm, dry, healthy home gave Ella space and time to develop supportive relationships, connect with agencies, and focus on her baby.

During Ella's time at the Ozanam Apartments she "made heaps of friends there. The other mums were all friendly and really supportive." The support that Ella appreciated most was "the support workers, they were very helpful, always there when you needed something. They were always there to help you." Ella found that Waipuna staff assigned to the Ozanam Apartments supported "a lot with baby. Stuff for baby and advice for baby."



**Ozanam Apartments on Pavitt Street**

Waipuna also helped in many other areas, "whatever you needed help with in your life, they just got it sorted." Ella and her daughter have moved on from Ozanam Apartments, though they remain actively involved with Waipuna. Ella still finds this input invaluable. "Waipuna were the only ones that helped me move. I was sick at the time and it was hard. They have helped me to learn to pay bills, like my power bill and rent and have helped when MSD got things wrong." Ella has learned to put trust in professionals and to ask for help when she needs it. "My support worker taught me it was okay to ask for help. It's not like other support places. Waipuna go over and above and help with whatever is needed."

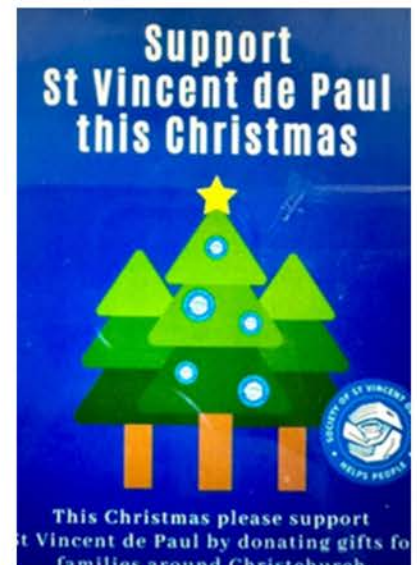
Ella continues to connect with different services within Waipuna as she works towards her goals and dreams.

**Kath Prins, SJOGWT**

## Young Vinnies Update – Cyrene Tionko

**Christmas Grotto** – our current focus is getting prepared for the Christmas Grotto being held at Diocesan Offices (entrance off Barbadoes Street) between 10am to 3pm on the 7th and 8th Dec 2024. We are targeting young families with children aged 17yrs and below with most of the children being aged 13 years and below.

*If you are able to help by donating a kiddies present (leave unwrapped so parents can easily choose gifts). The gifts can be dropped off at any of our Vinnies shops in Hornby, Papanui and Stanmore Rd.*





**Young Vinnies Activities term 4** - our focus this term has been all about acts of kindness. Our Young Vinnies were given a 28-Day "Kindness Challenge" consisting of daily tasks for our Young Vinnies to experience gratitude and aroha from the people they do these 28 activities for. Activities range from giving a family a hug, making yourself a healthy lunch, helping a neighbour with a role to a family centred activity like family movie nights, baking something for a loved one and so on .....



Christmas Blessings CYRENE TIONKO VINNIES YOUTH

Vinnies Christmas activities

1. Christmas Twilight Market – 3 Dec

Vinnies will be taking part in the Christmas Market being held between 5-7.30pm at the Cathedral Parish grounds at 373 Manchester Street in the city. The market will have a range of stalls and activities.

Vinnies will be holding a 'white elephant stall' that will have for sale cakes, vegetables, flowers, gift baskets, crafts, kiddies' toys & other items of value. In addition, there will be the now famous 'Chocolate Wheel' where loads of prizes will be raffled off – tickets mostly at \$2 each.

Invite your friends to come along on for the evening and support the parish market.



2. Christmas Grotto

Being held at the Diocesan Offices (use Barbadoes St entrance) on 7-8th December from 10am – 3pm. Gifts at the Christmas Grotto are mostly for Children under 13 years of age although there are some for children aged 13 years and under 18 years of age.





# Vinnies needs your Support!

The Society has a range of welfare programmes that supports both families including school pupils plus individuals. Help is provided in a variety of ways that includes food parcels, clothing, furniture & bedding plus payment of school activity fees, school uniforms etc. At Christmas time, we have additional activities such as Children's gifts at the Christmas Grotto plus Christmas top up's of our food parcels. **Please "Help us to Help Others."**

You can assist the Society in several ways –

- Donating to the Society to aid its good works – including its Christmas activities.

- Donating food or clothing or furniture – email Vinnies –

**admin@svdpcanterbury.nz**

- To volunteer a few hours – email Vinnies **volunteer@svdpcanterbury.nz**

- If you would like to make a financial donation – either scan the QR code opposite and it will take you to Vinnies website - donation page, or click the link to donate:

**www.svdpcanterbury/donations**

**'THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY'**



## From the Desk of the GM

As I reflected on what to say for this Christmas edition of our Vinnies newsletter, I thought of my regularly asking for your assistance and also, on our achievements that helped Vinnies fulfil our mission of 'helping the poor and needy' during the year. I then landed on the fact that all of this is only possible because of the generosity and hard work of our Conference members and shop volunteers.

A huge thank you to all who volunteer – be it in our parish conferences, our shops, our schools, businesses plus our donors. Without you, we could not do what we do. Thank You. As we rush into the Christmas season, may we all have good health, happiness and a safe and holy Christmas.

May the blessings of Christ be with you all.  
*Robyn Casey - General Manager*

*Season's Greetings*

*For all our fellow Vincentians, who were laid to rest in 2024*

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

This Newsletter was compiled by Mike Moore with contributions from Ian Tennant, Kath Prins, Cyrene Tionko and Robyn Casey and published by Trish O'Keefe