

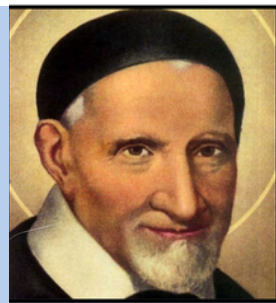


NEWSLETTER

St Vincent de Paul

Canterbury Area Council

June 2026



Welcome – Bill Manning, Canterbury Area President

As I reflect on the past three months, there has been a lot of activity in the Canterbury area. Our new conference coordinator, Phil Bell, has settled into his role well and has been active contacting the conference presidents and getting to know the conferences. He is a welcome addition to the team and feedback from the conferences is that he is having a positive impact. Thank you Phil for the work and effort you have put into the role.

May was an important month as we saw 250 new Junior Vinnies commissioned at a Commissioning Mass in Christchurch, and 20 new Junior Vinnies commissioned at a Commissioning Mass for Timaru and Ashburton. We now have about 700 Junior Vinnies in Canterbury. Thank you Cyrene for your work bringing all these young people together. It is heartwarming to see so many young people willing to give some of their time to St Vincent de Paul.

The demolition of the old house and shed at Stanmore Rd is now complete, and we prepare for the construction of the new building on the site. This work has been led by Mike Daly, who has done an outstanding job of pulling everything together.

The new Financial Chart of Accounts is in the final stages of becoming ready to implement. This has been a huge task led by Joe McCarthy, together with Bronwyn Arnold and the National office team of Natasha and Izabella.

The national AGM was held in March in Nelson. It was held over 3 days, and was attended by representatives from across New Zealand. Canterbury was represented by Polly, Clodagh, Cyrene and myself. Next year's AGM is to be held in Christchurch in March, and planning for that is already underway. As we get closer we will be looking for assistance from conferences to help with the event

Once again I would like to thank all our volunteers who help in the shops, with welfare and logistics. Without your help we could not achieve what we do. I also want to take this opportunity to thank our donors, both corporate and individual donors. Two of the corporate donors I would like to thank are New World, Stanmore Rd and the Elms Hotel in Papanui. New World selected Vinnies as its partner for the "Family 2 Family Promotion" donating 238 grocery bags and \$2,300 in food credits. This will make a huge difference to families in these difficult times. The Elms Hotel donated bedding to Vinnies, some went to the shops for sale and some to families who were in need of warm bedding for the winter. Once again thank you to all our very generous donors. We could not do what we do without your help.

Bill Manning



Polly Fisher – Business and Operations Manager

Kia tau te rangimārie ki a koutou, me te aroha o te Atua.

(May the peace of the Lord and the love of God be with you all.) Āmene.

E te Ariki, our loving and generous Father,

We come to you seeking the grace to recognize the Face of Christ in the poor and marginalized. Open our eyes to see, our ears to hear, and our hands to reach out to those who are in need in our communities.

E te Atua aroha, whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou. (Loving God, please listen to us.)

Grant us the strength (kaha) and the deep compassion (aroha) to serve the least of our brothers and sisters. Guide us to where we are most needed, and help us to be instruments of Your peace and dignity.



As winter takes hold, the needs within our community continue to grow. For many families, meeting basic needs such as keeping their homes warm and putting nutritious food on the table becomes increasingly difficult. Rising power costs place added pressure on already stretched household budgets, forcing some to make impossible choices between heating and eating.

Vinnies has been fortunate to be a recipient of the Family 2 Family Promotion from New World. The food donated will make a significant difference to those in our community who are struggling. A sincere thank you to New World Stanmore Road for your ongoing support and generosity.

Our welfare needs have increased by 11.9% over the past two months. Vinnies Canterbury have assisted 923 people this month. We have seen a substantial rise in the number of families requiring beds and furniture as they transition into stable, permanent housing. Requests for bedding and warm clothing have also increased dramatically as winter sets in. The demolition of the old house behind the Stanmore Rd shop has begun, making way for a new home for our logistics and welfare storage operations. This development will provide additional space to store essential items for those in need, as well as a centralised area for sorting and distribution.

Looking ahead to 2027, Canterbury will host next year's national AGM as Vinnies celebrates its 160th anniversary. This is an exciting milestone and a wonderful opportunity for Vinnies Canterbury.

We are always looking for volunteers to assist in our shop and logistics areas. If you are interested in joining a Conference or contributing in any way, please do not hesitate to contact Polly at Polly@svdpcanterbury.nz.

As we move through the colder months, we remain committed to supporting communities in need. *Polly Fisher*



New World Family 2 Family promotion



Demolition of old house behind Stanmore Rd Shop

Conference Coordinator Update – Canterbury

Kia ora koutou.

For those I haven't yet met, my name is Phil Bell and I serve as the Canterbury Conference Coordinator. My role is to support and encourage our Conferences, help strengthen connections across the region, assist with formation and recruitment, and work alongside Conference members as they continue their vital mission of serving those in need. One of the great privileges of this role is being able to visit Conferences and meet Vincentians where they are. Over recent months I have spent time with Conferences across Canterbury, listening to members, learning about their local challenges and celebrating the many ways they put faith into action. Every Conference has its own character and strengths, but what unites them is a genuine desire to serve Christ through service to others.



A significant focus this year has been supporting our Refounding journey. As we continue to reflect on our Vincentian identity, I have been encouraged by the conversations taking place about spirituality, membership, formation, and how we can ensure that our Conferences remain vibrant communities of faith and service for future generations.

Another area of focus has been volunteer recruitment and engagement. Across Canterbury we have welcomed new volunteers into Conferences, our shops, and various support roles. It has been heartening to see people respond generously when invited to put their faith into action. One of the lessons I continue to learn is that there is a place for everyone in Vinnies. Some are called to visit homes and deliver welfare, while others contribute through administration, logistics, mentoring, fundraising, advocacy, retail, or spiritual support. Together we truly are "many parts, one body."

One initiative that has particularly stood out for me has been our efforts to strengthen connections between Conferences. We can sometimes become focused on our own local activities, but when we gather together and share our experiences, we discover that we are part of something much bigger. We hope to make this a feature of our Festival Day to be held at Catholic Cathedral College on Saturday 26th September. Everyone will be invited and it will be a great opportunity for connection.

What has stood out most for me, however, has been the dedication of our members and volunteers. Time and again I meet people who quietly and faithfully serve others without seeking recognition. They give their time, energy, compassion, and prayer because they recognise the face of Christ in those they encounter. Their example reminds me that the Society of St Vincent de Paul is not simply an organisation that provides assistance; it is a community of people growing in holiness through service.

Thank you to every member and volunteer for the difference you make each day.

Phil Bell

Date to note and add to your Calendar
Saturday 26th Sept - Festival Day to be held at
Catholic Cathedral College.



Vinnies Commissioning Mass 2026



Three Young Vinnies Commissioning Masses were celebrated across the Canterbury region, bringing together students, teachers, parish communities, Conference Members, and supporters in a joyful celebration of faith, service, and community. Each Mass marked an important milestone in the journey of our Young Vinnies, commissioning and encouraging them to continue putting their faith into action within their schools and wider communities.

The largest of these celebrations was held at St Mary's Pro-Cathedral on Friday 1 May, where Fr Chris Orr and Fr Viet Thai celebrated Mass with representatives from 19 schools and more than 250 students, parents, teachers, and supporters. The celebration was enriched by the outstanding music and singing of the Marian College Choir, whose talent created a truly prayerful atmosphere, with special thanks also to Myra Fidow for her valued support.

In his homily, Fr Chris praised the young people for living out their faith through service as Young Vincentians. Reflecting on the Gospel message that there are "many rooms in my Father's house," he reminded those present that everyone has a place in God's family and encouraged the students to continue responding to Christ's call by serving others with compassion and courage. Following the Mass, participating schools received Commissioning Certificates and badges for their Young Vinnies members as symbols of their commitment to faith in action.

The Waimate and Ashburton Commissioning Masses offered a different, yet equally meaningful, experience by being integrated into Sunday Parish Masses. The parish-based celebrations fostered valuable relationship building and created a warm, welcoming atmosphere centred on faith, service, and community. This created a strong sense of connection between students, schools, Conferences, and parish communities while encouraging active participation from parishioners.



**Talented Marian
College Musicians**



Young Vinnies from St Patrick's Waimate, St Joseph's School Ashburton – Hato Hōhepa, and Our Lady of the Snows School were proudly commissioned, while other schools received their badges and certificates during school assemblies.

A special thank you goes to Couples for Christ Waimate and the Ashburton Conference for generously providing hospitality after each Mass. Their support helped create opportunities for students, families, and parishioners to connect and celebrate together. We extend our sincere thanks to all the schools, teachers, Conference Members, and parish communities for their ongoing encouragement of Young Vinnies. Special thanks also to the Catholic Development Fund (CDF) for their generous investment in youth formation, helping make these celebrations and opportunities possible.



Visit of Ralph Middlecamp, First Vice President of International Council of St Vincent de Paul Society

On Friday 17th April, the Society in Canterbury were privileged to receive a visit from Ralph Middlecamp (from USA) who is an International Vice President of the International Council General. He was visiting New Zealand to attend the Oceania Partnership Programme meeting that was held in Auckland between 9-12 April 2026. This meeting was hosted by New Zealand at which the National Presidents from around the Oceania region were able to attend along with Secretariate from Australia and NZ.



Ralph in the shop with Teresa, Keith, Mike and Polly

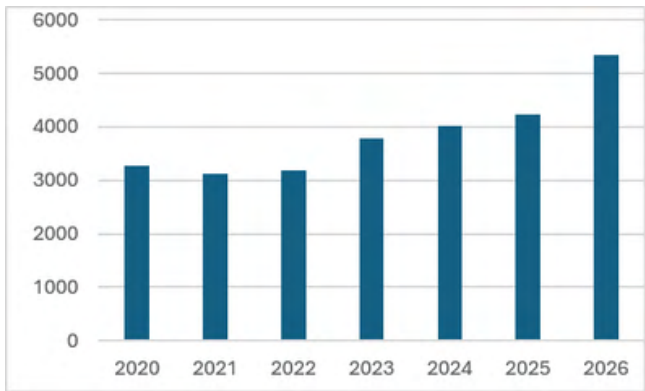


Mike Daly and Mike M with Cathie & Ralph

During the visit, several meetings were held with Ralph who was interested to learn about the work of the Society in Canterbury. In addition, he was keen to learn about the Ozanam Apartments that had been built by the Society in Canterbury as a special project on land that had been owned by the Society. And that these facilities were able to be built as a result of the generosity of many donors. The photo on the above right shows Hugo House that had been generously funded by the Hugo Trust.

Welfare requests for 6-months to June

The following graph shows the number of welfare requests received by St Vincent de Paul in the 6-month period to June since 2020 in the wider Christchurch area. It shows an increasing number of cases with 2026 year showing a significant increase of 26%.



Welfare requests received in 6-month period to June from 2020.

Thank you New World, Stanmore Rd

New World Stanmore Rd selected Vinnies Canterbury as their sponsorship partner for the Family 2 Feast promotion. This was an outstanding result and reflects a fantastic partnership between Vinnies Canterbury & New World with Kerry and the team.



The Loft

Vinnies attended their first Loft event promoting Winter Warmth initiatives. Attendance was high, with significant demand for warm children’s clothing and knitted items, all of which were well received.

The event highlighted the need for stronger promotional materials outlining Vinnies services and support offerings. There were numerous requests for pyjamas and sleepwear from attendees. Future event planning will include increased quantities of sleepwear and children’s clothing to better meet community demand.



Catholic Social Services (CSS) Soup Kitchen
Phil Bell and members of the Cathedral Conference attended the CSS Soup Kitchen event.
A significant amount of bedding, warm jackets, and clothing was distributed through Vinnies support. The event concluded earlier than anticipated due to a large initial turnout

Vinnies Health and Well Being Campaign



VINNIES

Health and Well Being Winter Campaign

923

requests for help responded to in the last month

This is made possible by donations of cash and goods. We need more people to donate regularly to ensure that St Vinnies can continue to help people who are struggling in our community.

HOW YOUR DONATION HELPS

\$50 /week

Help a family keep warm by keeping the heat pump on

\$100 /week

Help feed a family and ensure they start the day with breakfast

\$150 /week

Help with the cost of fuel, blankets and pyjamas

\$200 /week

Help a family pay their rent and have a warm place to live

MAKE A REGULAR DONATION

Set up an automatic payment with your bank:

Account Name:

Society of St Vincent de Paul Central Council of Canterbury

Account Number:

03-0854-0706103-000

Please put your name and email address as references.

You can also donate via the St Vincent de Paul Website
or the St Vincent de Paul Give A Little Page.

Any regular or one-off donation, no matter what size, is so much appreciated to ensure St Vinnies can keep helping people.



Successful Recruitment is a Choice

Maurice Lawlor - Cathedral President



All conferences are being challenged to 'grow their membership' by reaching out and inviting others to come along and join up as volunteers. For many, the opportunity to serve the poor is a pathway to personal holiness and a foundation to the church's identity and mission.

We now have a range of excellent resources to help conferences plan and run successful campaigns. The six best practice statements are an example of this, using these to guide recruitment plans is an important first step to creating a vibrant and active conference.

Our Cathedral Conference last month inducted eighteen new volunteers into their conference. President Maurice Lawlor has attributed the close supportive relationship with the Cathedral Parish and the best practice resources as key to this standout success. St Vincent De Paul was invited to lead one of the workshops at the very successful recent Parish Alive Conference held in May. The workshop focussed was 'Serving the Poor as Mission' and used Scripture to form the discussion within the workshop.

These workshops were well attended and generate good discussion with high levels of interest in the work of St Vincent De Paul. Everyone who expressed an interest in learning more about Vincent De Paul received personal follow up calls and the result was eighteen new members. The new volunteers are made up of a wide range of ages, gender, and cultures.

Maurice stresses the importance of following through on any expression of interest and making sure new members receive positive first experiences when they are mentored.

*Yes, there are people wanting to contribute and they just need
to be invited to come along.*

Re-establishing Vinnies Social Justice Committee

At the 2026 AGM in Nelson, a notice of motion was presented to re-establish the National Social Justice Committee. The motion was carried unanimously.

Brian Hutching was asked by National President, Gerry Stevens, to be the Chairperson and establish a Terms of Reference. This was done keeping in mind that the Terms of Reference "ensures our Vincentian mission remains aligned with the core tenets of Catholic Social Teaching."



A Committee was established comprising Brian Hutching (Chairperson), Gerry Stevens, David More (Regional Representative, Dunedin), Mike Fitzsimons (SVdP Media), Peter McGurk (St Mary's Pro-Cathedral member) & John Kennedy-Good (former Chair). The Committee intends to co-op members on to the committee as & when required for particular issues or meetings.

To date, there have been three online meetings with prayer and reflection and agenda items. A TOR is being developed on 'what we can achieve and how this relates to our core mission.'

At our last meeting on 17th June, David More presented the work he had done on the 'Move-On Amendment Bill submission'. We are working on the submission and presenting it before the deadline of 2nd July.

The next issue we will likely consider is a Nelson Area Council initiative "Steps to Freedom payment." The Committee will research the latest information, engage with other prison advocates and then publicly express concern that the Steps to Freedom payment is inadequate for released prisoners.

Around the Conferences-

Selwyn Conference – met Brigid recently at Mass and she reports that Selwyn have become busy working with local schools in the area that know which families are needing support. The schools provide a heads up on the needs of these families. At the start of winter, the Conference also contacted schools in Selwyn promoting the availability of “winter thermals and PJs” for students at the schools. This has helped to increase the visibility of Vinnies in Selwyn. In early July, Selwyn are also holding an afternoon tea for the Afghani family that were sponsored to move to NZ. It will mark 2-years since their arrival and concludes the agreement with the family. They have been most successful in settling into NZ with the children excelling at school. Congratulations go to former President Ian Tennant for the success of this initiative.

Cathedral Conference – each month the Conference makes a big order from a local supermarket and then members start the process of making food parcels in someone's garage before being transferred to the two food banks of the Conference. Thank you, team, for the time you devote to contributing to helping those in need.



Holy Family Conference, Timaru – Nola Hill reports on the sad loss of Vincentian Richard (Dick) Hannam. He served the society for many years serving as President of St Joseph's Conference and later, Vice President of the Holy Family Conference. Dick worked tirelessly in the community and was always generous with his time, visiting the sick and elderly in their homes, rest homes and hospitals. Further details in the Obituaries.

Temuka Conference – Frances Mulvey reports that some of their members have been busy manning the combined churches foodbank. Also held their AGM recently but were unable to elect a new President or Secretary.

TIMARU SHOP REPORT (by John O'Neill – Shop Committee)

We have had increased inquiries requesting food (1,100 parcels for year) and household items in the shop including furniture and especially clothing. These items are reasonably priced for the those in need.

We discovered four years ago the most desperate people in town are those needing teeth replacement with a cost they could never meet. We do a dentistry programme involving between 60 to 70 clients per year, none of which qualify for assistance. Many of these people have no teeth at all through domestic violence, health issues or neglect and have no hope of a job, discretionary money, eating normally or self-esteem of self and family. We also support extreme cases needing hearing aids.

All volunteers are aware and proud of their efforts enabling all these people to live a normal life otherwise denied them.

The Timaru shop is always buzzing with people and is a fun place to work. We have a team of 56 volunteers doing a variety of different jobs. We have a full range of items for sale with women's clothing being our biggest seller. We had a record month of sales last month and it is always exciting to see, as we know that this all helps the poor in our community. We are tracking well above last year sales which shows a sign of the times. Our sales have increased over the last five years by of \$100,000.00 and this is thanks to the wonderful team of volunteers and local supporters

Introducing Sharon Leonard - Timaru Shop Manager

I am the mother of four adult children and four grandchildren. My love is my family and when not at Vinnies I can be found on the bowling greens. I have been involved in retail for many years and the skills I have learnt in my early years have been most useful in my role as Shop Manager.

I have worked for Vinnies since 2001.



Sharon Leonard
Timaru Shop Manager

Kai for the Community

On Sunday 14th June evening a team from our Cathedral Conference partnered with Verity and the Kai for Community team to prepare food and then feed over seventy homeless companions.



It was a special time to mingle, serve and pray with some of our most vulnerable. Well done to everyone involved. A big thanks go to the many Vincentians who provided an amazing array of food – including yummy desserts - for this occasion.



St Vincent de Paul 2026 AGM, Nelson

The Society of St Vincent de Paul gathered in Nelson in March for its Annual General Meeting, bringing together members from across Aotearoa to reflect on the past year's challenges and chart a course for the future. The gathering opened in prayer honouring the Society's Catholic roots and its mission to serve those in need with dignity and respect. National President Gerry Stephens welcomed attendees, acknowledging the tireless work of conferences and the generosity of donors who have sustained the Society's outreach.

A key theme of the AGM was 'refounding' as well as discussions regarding the growing number of New Zealanders who are employed yet struggling to make ends meet. It was acknowledged that the cost of living crisis is pushing more people to the edge, and our role is to stand alongside them.

The AGM is a time to celebrate the contribution of volunteers and stories were shared of initiatives that have made a tangible difference in people's lives. The occasion offered the opportunity to catch up with our Vincentians brothers and sisters, share meals together, celebrate Mass together, chat and laugh together.

We had the privilege of Cardinal John Dew speaking and sharing a presentation on Pope Leo XIV's Apostolic Exhortation, titled "Dilexi Te."



The focus of this talk emphasised that the Church's mission is inseparable from its commitment to marginalised humanity.

Cardinal Dew shared that the message of "Dilexi Te" resonates with the very heart of the St Vincent de Paul Charism: 'to find Christ in the poor and to serve Him with both effective and affective love.' .

Pope Leo urges a transformative charity that promotes social justice and human dignity. Should you wish to read the full Apostolic Exhortation click here: [_](#)

[Read the full Apostolic Exhortation by clicking here](#)

Obituaries

[Let us pray for past members of the St Vincent de Paul Society who have died recently.](#)

Carmel (Margaret) Harmon - Cathedral

It's with deep sadness that I inform you of the peaceful passing of Carmel Harmon last Tuesday. Carmel was a loyal member of our Cathedral conference and before amalgamation with the St Mary's conference, she pulled back because of ailing health not so long ago, but always a great supporter of Vinnies and continued to take a keen interest and willing to help if called upon. She will be sadly missed by those who were fortunate to know her and I ask you to keep her in our prayers. Requiem Mass was celebrated on Tuesday June 23rd at St Mary's Pro Cathedral.

Janice Wright - Papanui Shop

Polly Fisher reported that it was with much sadness that she advised of the sudden passing of Janice Wright. Janice was a much loved volunteer at our Papanui store - she will be dearly missed. Our thoughts are with Janice's husband Bill and her family. Janice's funeral was held on Monday 18th May.

Judy Garvey - Cathedral

Judy was the President of our Mairehau Conference around 2012. She was an amazing member of our Conference and she is especially remembered for the building of our Mairehau Food Bank. With the help of her son John who was a builder, organised our Conference and members of the Parish to get together and construct our Food Bank that we are still using today.

Her funeral Mass was celebrated at St Gregory's Parish Church on 9th April. Please pray for Judy and her family during this sad time. She was a wonderful member of our Conference and the Society of St Vincent de Paul.

Richard Hanham - Timaru

Richard Hannan was a devoted and long serving member of the Society of SVDP whose principles and guidance he faithfully lived by. Dick served as the President of St Joseph's Conference and Vice President of the Holy Family Conference, and was their representative on the Shop Committee. He worked tirelessly in the community and was always generous with his time, visiting the sick and elderly in their homes, rest homes and hospitals. He made himself available to collect the clothing from the donation bins around the town and deliver it to the shop. He was there to deliver firewood or food and always took part in the Toot for Tucker Annual appeal. The collection and distribution of furniture was another chore that Dick was always available to do. In fact, nothing was too much trouble for him and his assistance was cheerfully given and never refused.

He also served many years on a committee responsible for the management and maintenance of the Ozanam Flats. Dick was very popular with and well respected by the residents of the flats. He always found time to visit them, take them shopping or to keep appointments and generally cared for their welfare.

An unassuming good living man, Dick was well respected by all the St Vincent de Paul Society people in Timaru. He will be so greatly missed, especially by the members of the Holy Family Conference. A beautiful Requiem Mass was concelebrated by both our priests with a moving burial service from Fr Tang who enjoyed the Irish singing at the graveside.

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

Newsletter compiled by Mike Moore and Trish O'Keefe with contributions from, Bill Manning, Polly Fisher, Phil Bell, Cyrene Tionko, Maurice Lawlor, Brian Hutching, John O'Neill & Clodagh Ward, Frances Mulvey and Nola Hill.

**"...TO SERVE THE POOR
IS TO GO TO GOD..."**

St. Vincent de Paul

