



THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF AUSTRALIA

# Keep in Touch

November 2009  
Volume 9  
Number 4

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

## The Sisters of Charity and Long Bay - 100 Years On.



*The bell cast from 300 decommissioned Jackson locks*



*Chaplains Ray Beckman (Anglican), Gary Ring (AOG), Sr Pauline and Sr Annette Cunliffe rsc at Long Bay*

There would be few people who, if reference was made to a gaol, would not automatically think of Long Bay, or “the Bay” as it is so often referred to.

On the 25th August, 1909 Long Bay Gaol was proclaimed as a women’s reformatory. On August 25th, a “commemoration” rather than “celebration” of the Centenary was marked among other things by the erection of a bell cast from 300 decommissioned “Jackson” type locks collected from various correctional centres around the state.

However, there are many who believe that much more important than the “unpickable” Jackson locks, which ensured that few moved beyond the walls, was the presence of our Sisters who ministered with such care to the women, and later to the men, at “the Bay” over the 100 years.

Who will ever forget Sister M. Maurus Tierney? Many won’t, as we were often her Sunday companions, young and inexperienced with prisons and prisoners! Or, Sister Germanus McQuillan and Carmel Schick, both of whom received the DCS Minister’s Citation for their ministry, and Sister Jane Frances Wall?

At Sister Germanus’ funeral at Edgecliff there were many officers from Long Bay present, and they formed a guard of honour as her body was escorted from the Church.

The Sisters travelled by tram and later by car, but no matter how, they were faithful visitors. Yes, we may say, long before there was an established Chaplaincy Service their faithful ministry set the scene for what was to follow. In 1988 there were four full-time Chaplains and a couple ministering

for an hour, and once a week a Jewish Rabbi. Currently, there is a full time Coordinator, an Anglican Priest, an Administrator, a Sister of Charity... 38 full time and 36 part time Chaplains from the Christian, Jewish, Islamic and Buddhist faiths ministering in the NSW Prisons. Six are at Long Bay ministering to over 1,300 inmates.

There is also a Community Chaplain who follows up and provides various services and resources for ex-inmates.

Chaplaincy is well funded by the Department of Corrective Services, indicating the regard it has for the Chaplains and their ministry, not only to inmates but to the staff and families. Bell or no bell - locks or no locks, good things will always continue to happen at Long Bay and other NSW Centres through those who care.

*“I was in prison and you visited me” Matt. 25 v. 36*

# Gap Year Experience



Photo taken of Belfast Peace Wall when participants spent the weekend in Northern Ireland



Megan's parents visited UK. Clare Christie, Ros Hiser, Maree Gaffney, Chris Gaffney



Helping at St Joseph's market. Megan Gaffney, Clare Christie, Sr Virginia Wilkinson RSC, Becc Hyland



At Clapton Girls Technical High School with Year 12 students. From left: Student, Virginia Wilkinson RSC, Ros Hiser, student, student, standing Amanda Keighly ordained Anglican chaplain at St Joseph's Hackney, student, Megan Gaffney, Clare Christie, Becc Hyland

*"My favourite times were those when I could simply sit and chat with the Sisters. They have all lived such interesting lives, and have so much wisdom to share, so I loved our chats and will never forget all that I learnt from them."*

Becc Hyland, Participant in the GAP Experience

All the GAP participants have returned safely to Australia having completed three months in the United Kingdom, based at St Joseph's Hackney with Sr Virginia Wilkinson. During the time they were in the UK, their parents visited and two students travelled further into Europe afterwards.

They have reflected on this time, highlighting the hospitality and warmth of their hosts at Hackney, and also when visiting Ireland at the invitation of the Irish Congregational Leader. They speak of youth and age, life and death, outings in the service of others as well as enriching their own experience of another land. Their activities were a means of relating with those around them. These included gardening, chatting with the elderly Sisters and videoing their life stories, joining them in art and craft, exercising with them and taking them on wheelchair outings.

A significant feature was their visit to Dublin, Cork and Foxford Wool Mills, giving a strong sense of our heritage.

Ros commented on the influence of Mary Aikenhead:

*"This not only told the story of her life but also hinted to the legacy that one woman left behind. It really showed how one person can make such an impact to those coming after them."*

Sr Virginia described St Joseph's Hackney:

*"... an oasis in the East End of London where people were so beautifully cared for, with total consideration for their faith, culture and circumstances. The warmth of the community gave the support and energy we needed."*



At Mary Aikenhead Heritage Centre Dublin. Sr Mairead, Leadership Team, Becc Hyland, Clare Christie, Megan Gaffney, Sr Caroline RSC (young Zambian sister), Ros Hiser, Sr Rosemary McGowan RSC, Sr Virginia Wilkinson RSC

## Some participants share their experiences

### Megan Gaffney

Being in the Hospice Day Centre every week was a fantastic experience as in particular there was one group whom I felt we grew close to with the help of some clay!! This Thursday the group discovered that we Australians weren't as crazy as they thought, and that having some Australians there during the Ashes meant that they could poke fun at us.

Another massive part of my life in London was the experience of meeting the various Sisters. Having met now quite a few different Sisters - some from Australia, Zambia, Nigeria, London and Ireland, you can really see how they strive for the same goal even if they live in completely different situations. The Sisters in London, though they were retired, still never stopped putting others before them. I am truly thankful for the Sisters who enhanced my experience of London with all their humour, life stories, and just the general compassion for everyone.

### Ros Hiser

It was incredibly moving to meet with the patients at the Day Hospice.

They were facing death with

all the emotions involved: sadness, regret, but surprisingly with such dignity and a love of life. It taught me how important it is to appreciate every minute that we have, because we never know how quickly it will change.

They were so impressed to have young people around them again and I felt glad that they got so much out of our presence. I enjoyed every minute in the vibrant city of London and the community of Hackney!

### Becc Hyland

One of my favourite activities was the gardening we did once a week. At first I didn't fully understand the importance of the gardens at the Hospice, however over time I came to see why they are so important, and why our work to help keep them tidy was so appreciated. Day Hospice patients, staff, friends and families of patients, and patients themselves, all use the gardens as a retreat when they feel the need to relax.

Often when I walked past, there would be many people sitting out by the pond or in the back garden and I came to see how important having those tranquil places was to them. So, while gardening once a

week was lots of fun, it was also a great way in which we could help keep the Hospice gardens soothing and serene for the many people who would retreat to them so often.

### Clare Christie

From my experiences helping in the Day Hospice, visiting patients with Sister Catherine and attending one of the ward meetings. I saw just how attentive the staff were to the patients' needs whether it be physical, emotional or spiritual.

One thing that really touched me was when the primary school students from Guardian Angels Primary school came in every Tuesday to do artwork with the day patients. Being able to watch over the weeks up until the exhibition and to see how attached the children got to the patients was a really beautiful thing to see.

One part of my three months spent in Hackney that I will never forget is the friendships that we had with the sisters there. I absolutely loved spending time with all of them. They all made us feel so much at home and really included us within their lives.

**THE JOURNEY CONTINUES** as they settle back into Australian life and their future. All four will be furthering their education next year and catching up with the many Sisters of Charity they have now met through the GAP Experience Program. Another aspect of the program has been the opportunity for the Sisters of Charity in UK and Zambia to get to know some Australians and the Sisters of Charity of Australia at a deeper level and something of what we do.

As Sr Virginia writes:

*"I also experienced the affinity our Australia Order has with our founding Congregation. The spirit and charism are very tangible. It was a joy to share the dedication and wonderful spirit that has been evident since the time of Mary Aikenhead, with the four GAP participants."*

Contributed by Margaret Costigan, 31 October 2009

# REFLECTING WITH MOMENTS OF A SABBATH JOURNEY EPIPHANY TO PENTECOST 2009

Sabbath time  
sabbatical pause  
along back roads  
through landscapes  
ancient and new  
mystic places  
of Celtic tradition  
from Tara's hill and  
her Stone of Destiny  
to Celtic Crosses  
of burial sites  
of monastic ruins  
of cathedrals and churches alive today  
holding me in stillness  
grounding my being  
freeing my spirit  
  
All Hallows sabbatical  
invited me  
to take stock  
through holding the strands of life  
looking afresh  
through lenses of scripture, theology, literature,  
spirituality, liturgy, pastoral care . . . . .  
through experiencing the Celtic flavour and  
richness of culture and  
spiritual heritage  
on a campus  
rich in its contribution to the Australian church, and  
among people today  
from different cultures and nations

the horizon was vast  
the invitation, compelling

Dublin's panorama of Cultural Treasures  
is enormous -  
nourishing the soul through poets, artists, writers,  
architects, musicians. . .tuned in to beauty, to tragedy,  
to all of life . . . . .  
such was the experience of  
the Book of Kells at Trinity College  
the original manuscripts of Religions of the World at the  
Chester Beattie library  
(echoed for me in LA in the Getty Museum)  
the water colours of Turner in Dublin's January gallery  
the inspiration of the W.B. Yeats exhibition  
hearing his poetry, seeing relevant landscapes and

portraits,  
being in the poetic circle . . . . .  
the night of Russian music in the National Concert Hall  
the Liam Lawton concert in the pro-Cathedral  
walking in places of historical significance, whether they be  
in O'Connell Street, or  
on the Halfpenny Bridge, or by the river Boyne, or . . . . .

And, I was in Mary Aikenhead country  
walking in her footsteps  
deeply moved time and again  
when among her 21st century Sisters of Charity  
in Dublin, in Cork, in Los Angeles  
experiencing their outreach and care for those  
who are poor and in need  
and their warmth of hospitality

I found myself in a rhythm of celebrations in this year of  
Mary Aikenhead's 150th anniversary of her death -  
in Sydney in July 2008  
in Harold's Cross Dublin in March 2009  
in LA California in May 2009  
How privileged to be in these gatherings meeting many of  
our Sisters, their families, friends and colleagues - including  
Sisters visiting  
from Zambia, Nigeria, Venezuela, England and  
Scotland -  
at one around our World.

And I was in the land of my ancestors  
connecting with relatives of my family tree  
with Delaneys / Ryans of Borrisoleigh and Pallus, Tipperary  
on hallowed ground  
of ancestral roots  
in people and places  
stories told, remembered, savoured, on-going

The journey homeward held memories dear  
within Winter's snows and mists  
Spring's vibrant colours and flowers  
California's warm early Summer and hospitality  
and the welcoming home of Autumn's tints.

The horizon continues to beckon . . . . .

Maureen Delaney rsc  
May 31, 2009.



Maureen Delaney at the Delaney Family Burial Site



Sisters gathered at New Grange



All Hallows in the Spring

# August Jubilees

*Sincere congratulations to the following Sisters who celebrated their Jubilees in August:*

*Platinum ~ 70 years:  
~ 25th August ~*

Sister Leonore Murphy

*Diamond ~ 60 years:  
~ 27th August ~*

Sisters Paulina Pilkington,  
Virginia Wilkinson and  
Dawn Bang.

*Golden ~ 50 years:  
~ 8th August ~*

Sisters Maureen Parker,  
Maryanne Confoy and  
Valerie Green.

*Silver ~ 25 years:  
~ 19th August ~*

Sister Adele Cottrell-Dormer.

Although Sister Colleen Jackson was not an August Jubilarian, we rejoiced with her earlier in the year when she celebrated her Silver Jubilee.

*Best wishes and assurance of prayers for each of you!*

# Eulogies

Sister Patricia Mary Ryan rsc  
26 May 2009



It is my privilege today on behalf of our community to speak these words of remembrance.

Last night at the vigil, family, colleagues, Sisters of Charity and friends shared stories of Patricia, the Scottish dancer, the loving Aunt, the cousin (the glue that kept the family together), the Nurse, the Director of Nursing, the Sister in the Novitiate, the Sister in the Community, the Sister who cared for the baby boarders at St Vincent's College Potts Point, the parish worker, the friend of the poor, the cook, a person who, no matter what the task was, put her whole heart and soul into doing it thoroughly and for the 'Greater Glory of God'.

Today we thought we would place our 'Words of Remembrance' around her journey of the past five months and five days. Patricia went on holidays late last year up to her cousin Robyn and family, she rang us and described a nasty incident that happened on Stradbroke Island, she nearly choked on a hamburger. Upon her return this had to be investigated. Investigations involved many visits to St Vincent's Campus.

Patricia was usually driven in by Sisters from Concord West and accompanied by Sisters from her community. Patricia

loved coming into St Vincent's Campus; she would always bump in to friends and colleagues that she knew from her days as Director of Nursing, in fact she actually came to the Sisters' Christmas meeting which Steven Rubic invited her to as she was having further tests. Our memory at this time was one of how overwhelmed she was by the kindness, skill, compassionate care she experienced each and every time she came to the campus.

Patricia received her diagnosis of Cancer on 16 December 2008, which was her birthday. The way forward was "Palliative Care". Her devastation - no Christmas dinner with Liz Harper rsc.

The months ahead for Patricia were times of slowing down, quiet, pottering, visits from family, Sisters, friends, colleagues, her spiritual director; they came from Queensland, Lismore, Melbourne, Sydney. Patricia loved these times as she was able to say thank you and show off 'her place'. The Rosary beads, Breviary, Music were always close and enjoyed.

In February at 'her place' at Concord West, the community and Sisters from Concord West participated in a healing Mass with her. Fr Brian was the Celebrant at this Mass. She presented us all with the book and Crucifix that spoke to St Francis. The words inscribed with each book read: "Pray for me as I will for thee, that we may merrily meet in Heaven" (St Thomas Moore), followed by a personal greeting for each: 'This is my sincere prayer that we will meet together and with our God and loved ones in Heaven', Patricia Mary.

Sr Patricia Grantham's Memorial Mass at Sacred Heart Church was another very significant occasion for her - she met with Board Directors, Doctors, Nurses, colleagues and we were able to share stories and reminisce. She was so happy.

Early Monday morning, 18 May, Patricia called Sr Liz and they together decided to activate Vital Call. She was taken to the Emergency Department at Concord Hospital. She knew this was her last hospitalisation. She could not believe the end

had come so quickly.

Over the next four days, once pain had been relieved, Patsy prepared to die. Her community, Sisters from Concord West, Congregational Leadership, niece, nephew, grand-niece, grand-nephew, spiritual director, cousins, friends, colleagues, visited and phoned from country NSW and interstate. Fr Brian anointed her. His words to her 'Patricia, I have never known anyone as prepared as you to meet God.'

Each and every one one said their good-byes, prayed, sang, cried. We heard 'Proud to call you Aunty Patricia'; 'You've prayed for me all my life, relax now, my turn to pray for you'; 'Thank you'; 'What a privilege to share 10 years of community with you'; 'You were the glue that kept the family together'; 'I love you'.

On Thursday, Patricia shared with us that the 'puzzle wasn't solved'; there was a letter and word she couldn't get out. I told her I was hopeless with puzzles, Deirdre would have to help her. With that her grand-niece and grand-nephew came and at 3pm, Robyn, her cousin. She sent her grand-nephew out to get me 'Clare, the puzzle is solved. These were the words and letter'. Her last words were to Robyn 'you just made it'.

Patricia died peacefully at six minutes past seven in the evening with Robyn and Sr Paulina Pilkington at her side.

To us, Patricia's life and how she lived it, portrays a faith-filled, loving, loyal, grateful human being: Proud to be a Sister of Charity, aunt, cousin, friend, colleague.

Death can come, I was told once, as a thief in the night or as a 'Wedding Banquet'. It came to Patricia as a 'Wedding banquet'.

Enjoy the Banquet.  
God bless you Patsy.  
We Love you.

*Eulogy of Sr Patsy Mary by Clare Nolan  
on behalf of Sr Patsy's community*

## Sister Una McAllister rsc 2 October 2009



*Motto: God Alone (Luke 18:18-23)*

Una's life was a rich, blessed one; she came from a loving secure family, was raised in Essendon, Victoria; and educated by the Sisters of Charity at St Columba's, Essendon. As a young woman, Una worked in the Commonwealth Bank, enjoyed furthering her education, sport and going out with friends.

Entering the Sisters of Charity in Sydney must have been a wrench for Una's Mum, Dad, Jack and Ray, as she was the only daughter and sister. We often shared how selfless our parents were, if religious life was what you believed God was calling you to then they would not stand in your way. Una enjoyed being a Sister of Charity: her passion was education, however after discernment she was open and prepared to go and do whatever the Congregation wished her to do and to do it wholeheartedly.

What comes to mind is Una's Missioning as Regional Superior and Councillor to Queensland. Queensland, that place! Too far from Melbourne, too hot and so it went on (not much) as Una was not inclined to go on and on. Una went, loved the place and people, became totally involved with Church and religious life, explored the State, and was so happy to spend those three years close to her darling nephew, Ross.

When Una was Regional Superior and Councillor in the 1980's, it was evident

that the Congregation needed to look at doing things differently in administering our apostolic works. It was agreed we would commence with the Health Apostolate. Monthly breakfast meetings commenced at Potts Point, Una was the Chairperson, with the group consisting of Board Chairmen and Sister Administrators (not easy) especially as Una "was a teacher". However, from those beginnings came the Sisters of Charity Health Service, now St Vincent's Health Australia.

Una was a woman of integrity, she listened, questioned, looked at the issue – not the person – formed an opinion, dared to stand up and be counted.

Over the years, Una loved the humanising of religious life, she loved the fact we could spend quality time with our families. Once, when a Sister moved from Sydney to Clifton Hill Community, her mother came with her, helped her unpack and settle in; Una thought that was great.

Una's family meant everything to her. She was so grateful for the long life lived to the full, of her parents. She loved Ray and Jack and their spouses, Gwen and Mary, and was so proud of her nieces and nephews and their spouses.

In November 2008 Una contacted her friends and told us that she had just returned from the specialist and that he had informed her that she was in the end stage of kidney failure. Una had months to live, not years. This was a huge shock to her and hard to come to terms with. Talking with Una over the following weeks, answering questions, being present to her as she suffered the disappointment of not being well enough to attend the Congregational General Chapter, the Missioning of the Congregational Leader and Councillors, and visiting Sydney one more time to see her old friends, especially those resident in St Joseph's Village, was special.

Liz Reid, the Health and Aged Care Coordinator for our Sisters in Victoria supported and guided Una on her journey. She felt safe and secure in your care Liz, thank you.

Melbourne City Mission Community Palliative Care Services received Una into their care whilst at home. The weekly visits of the nurses, Nerida and Annie, and the volunteer, Sue, were a great support. Una's community – Dorothy Maher, Cathy Meese, Joan Stapleton, Trish Shinnars, Liz Dwyer and Regina Millard, were marvellous companions ensuring all her special needs were met.

A Mass of anointing and thanksgiving with her Community, family and colleagues from the Catholic Mission Office was a surprise to her and touched her deeply. At this Mass there was a special presentation to Una from Archbishop Denis Hart acknowledging her contribution to Catholic education in Victoria.

In early May it was suggested to Una that she go to Caritas Christi Hospice, Kew for respite care. This was a familiar place she loved; however she never thought she would one day be a recipient of care. Una returned home for a short time; she was pleased to be doing this as there were things she needed to do. During this time she celebrated her 84th birthday on June 14th and expressed the desire to attend the Commissioning and Blessing of the Trustees of Mary Aikenhead Ministries on 22 July 2009. She saw this as a milestone for the Congregation.

Una's health declined, which necessitated re-admission to Caritas Christi Hospice, Kew. The day Hospice was a favourite place - if she wasn't in her room you would always find her there. Her desire to attend the Mary Aikenhead Ministries function was fulfilled. It was now time for Una to take her leave of us; her time of struggle was over. Sisters, family and friends kept watch and she died peacefully on the feast of the Guardian Angels, October 2nd. Una was truly a remarkable woman. Our loss is Heaven's gain. We love you Una and we will miss you. Pray for us. To your feast with the fruit of our lands and the work of your hands; Go to your feast.

*Eulogy of Sr Una by Clare Nolan on behalf of Sr Una's Rowe St community*

## *Sisters of Charity Companions - Sydney*

The "Sisters of Charity Companions" arose as a sub-group of the "Membership and Commitment Committee" prior to the last General Chapter.

The first meeting of the Sydney based group was held on the 24th August 2008 at Ashfield convent. At this stage Sisters Libbey Byrne, Tess Marcelo and Marina Ward invited several other Sisters and lay men and women to come together to explore the nature of such a group and offer suggestions as to what they would like to experience in such a group. About thirty people shared ideas ranging from Prayer/Reflection type meetings to practical social justice action and they were very enthusiastic. This first meeting was to gain ideas.

After the Chapter's endorsement, our second meeting was held at Auburn on the 7th December 2008. Several people had decided not to continue, but several new Sisters and lay companions joined us.

**15th March** Our first meeting this year was at the Liverpool Convent, Bigge St with the majority of lay people coming from the Liverpool / Cabramatta areas but not exclusively. We agreed to meet every two months and set out dates for 2009.

What do we do? For our first few gatherings: 3rd May, 28th June, 23rd August, 18th Oct. Sister Libbey presented a combination of the Story of Mary Aikenhead, Ignatian Spirituality, and the early Sisters of Charity in Australia via power point presentations. We received handouts on "Finding

*God in All Things*", "The Meaning of Charism", "The Call to Discipleship", "The Ignatian Founding Principle" and questions for reflection.

The emphasis in our group has been on prayerful reflection, after a very short input or Scripture Reading. All present have shared generously.

Sister Jean Montgomery does a great job in sending reminder letters, keeping in touch with everyone and also putting reminders in some Parish Bulletins and our faxes. Several other Sisters have joined with the group from time to time and all are welcome. A couple of men have been regulars and add colour to our sharing.

All seem very keen to continue coming to the group even when they know they can't come each time. Just last week two of the lay people from Liverpool voluntarily told me how helpful the last gathering had been.

Our next gathering is in Loreto Place next to All Saints Church Liverpool on Sunday afternoon the 29th November from 2.p.m. to 4.p.m. All are welcome and besides the spiritual riches there is always a delicious afternoon tea.

We would be delighted if Sisters invited lay friends or colleagues to join our group and also ex-students from our past schools and colleges who they think might be interested.

For further information ring Jean Montgomery on 02 9798 7302

*Jean Marie Brennan*

## *A Story of Hope*



The photo is of an Eritrean family. They fled Eritrea 13 years ago. As they were leaving Mum was carrying a baby and dad was struggling with whatever belongings they owned and two young boys who wanted to be carried. Dad, Negussi struggled and called on God to help. The family spent nine years in a Refugee camp and eventually was accepted by the Australian Government. They were settled in Perth but no one spoke their language. The family were traumatised one night when fireworks were let off over Perth. Before leaving the Refugee Camp Negussi was given a phone number of a friend of a friend in Brisbane. Through the Government, it was arranged that the family come to Brisbane and settle near their friends.

Now that the family is happy and learning English they want God to be a part of their lives for they believe that God never forgot them. They were baptised last Saturday evening. I have been working with them through an interpreter and will continue till they are fully initiated into the Catholic Faith.  
*Cate O'Brien.*



*KEEP IN TOUCH* is published by the Congregational Office of the Sisters of Charity of Australia.  
Level 1, 75 Grafton Street, Bondi Junction, NSW 2022  
Telephone 02 9367 1222 Fax 02 9367 1223 Email [James.Griffiths@rscoffice.com](mailto:James.Griffiths@rscoffice.com)

**PRIVACY STATEMENT** The Sisters of Charity have a privacy policy statement detailing how personal information is managed, pursuant to the Privacy Act 1988 and the Privacy Amendment (Private Sector) Act 2000. People receiving this newsletter via mail will have their names on our database. This list is not used for any other purpose and will not be given to any other organisation. If you would like your name removed from this list, please contact the Congregational Office.