



MARY AIKENHEAD MINISTRIES

# JOURNEYS

NEWSLETTER

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LOVE

Love

*'Loving is risky. To love is to be vulnerable. Giving your heart to someone ensures it will be broken, pierced, wounded and made malleable. Give it anyway.'* (Sr Stanislaus Kennedy)

# LOVE

Love is central to life. It is lived by us all. As an emotion and feeling, it is sung about, spoken about, written about, celebrated, referenced, yet not easy to define.

It is the language of heart, and at its best, it informs our actions...

It is the language and central message of scripture...

As we know, it is also one of Mary Aikenhead Ministries' key values, grounded in scripture and our heritage.

We see 'love in action' across the breadth of Mary Aikenhead Ministries in the relationships that exist, how we serve and in the choices we make. Love is in the actions that grow from the service and strength, compassion and kindness that is so evident in the myriad of relationships across our ministries.

If one ponders human love as the flourishing of the whole person, then the actions that bring dignity and respect to others, are in fact, what invites us to be our best selves for others.

Irish Sister of Charity, Sr Stanislaus Kennedy, in 'Gardening the Soul', writes:

*'Loving is risky.  
To love is to be vulnerable.  
Giving your heart to someone ensures it will be broken, pierced, wounded and made malleable.  
Give it anyway.'*

The Sisters of Charity know this well...

Their motto, - *Caritas Christi Urget Nos* - translated as 'The Love of Christ Impels'. A motto that from its beginning speaks of the Sisters' deep and abiding faith, trust in the Providence of God and the great joy that is at the heart of the Sisters of Charity service of the poor. The word Caritas is about relationships, about the changing facets of love, one that calls us to action through the person of Jesus Christ

A thread of loving service is at the heart of each and every Sister's vocation...

Central to this thread has been the Sisters' partnering in mission with lay women and men in bringing 'the love of Christ' to life in all their various foundations. This thread of loving service continues to flourish today in Mary Aikenhead Ministries across education, health, aged care, social outreach and research. The Mary Aikenhead Ministries' Vision, Mission and Values document speaks of love as being at **the heart of all human relationships**.

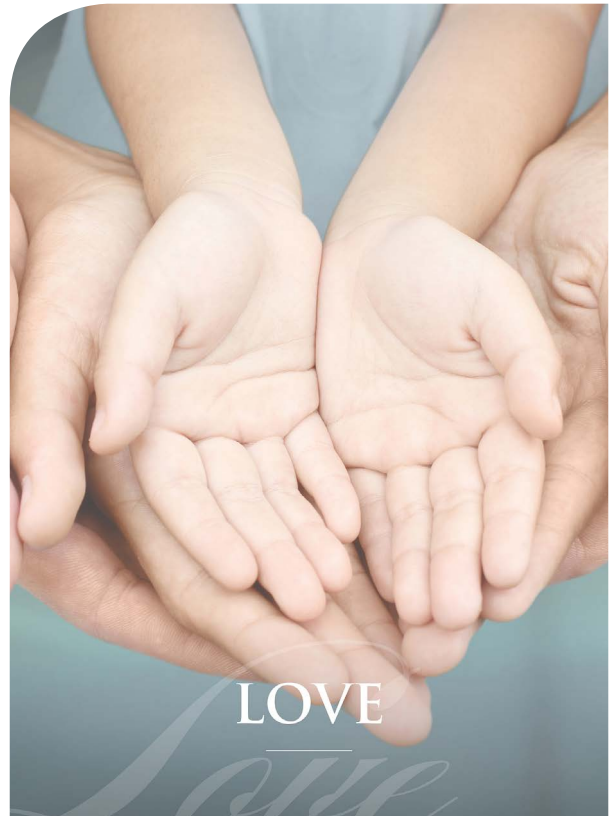
Love is both central and sacred to our mission.

In June, sixteen pilgrims from across Mary Aikenhead Ministries participated in the MAM pilgrimage to Ireland; the first since 2019. One of the many highlights was visiting the chapel designed by Mary Aikenhead, including a beautiful sculpture of Jesus washing the feet of Peter – an enduring example of loving service.

*After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and returned to the table, Jesus said to them, 'Do you know what I have done for you? You call me Teacher and Lord – and you are right, for that is what I am. So, if I, your Lord and teacher have washed your feet, you also ought to wash another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.'* (John 13: 12-15)

I can't help but think about Venerable Mary Aikenhead's reason for selecting this scripture, and wondering what her choice of loving service is saying to each of us in 2023 and beyond?

Ms Margaret McKenna  
Trustee, Mary Aikenhead Ministries



# FAREWELL TO JANET FREEMAN

Janet Freeman has been a respected and valued Trustee of MAM for five and a half years. For personal reasons Janet has decided to resign as a Trustee of Mary Aikenhead Ministries (MAM) and her term ended at the close of the Mary Aikenhead Ministries Conference on 12 May.

My fellow Trustees and I would like to take this opportunity to thank Janet for her very significant and selfless contribution to MAM during her term as a Trustee.

Janet's first encounter with the Sisters of Charity was at Bethlehem College where she was educated by the Sisters of Charity. Then Janet's first encounter with MAM was as a Councillor on the Mary Aikenhead Education Australia Advisory Council. From there Janet was appointed a Trustee of MAM in January 2018 and was also appointed the Board Chair for Mary Aikenhead Education Ltd.

Janet's passion, contribution, and service to MAM and the ministries has been outstanding and MAM has been very fortunate to have someone of such high calibre to be a part of the MAM journey. Janet was always a very active participant in MAM and in our Trustee meetings. Janet was not reluctant to be the trustee who did not agree with something and would give her cogent reasons for that (often those who dissent are the ones who add much to the discussions). In all of this, she was always courteous and respectful.

Indeed, Janet is a very kind and thoughtful person always aware of the needs of others. She is the one who checks if anyone needs anything, even a coffee. The MAM staff were always very appreciative of her gentle manner and how she demonstrated the four values of MAM. Janet is a big thinker and a great ideas person and her contribution will be sorely missed around the Trustee table.

Janet was very involved with the idea for an annual MAM Oration and the recently completed the Early Years Project. The annual Oration will be an initiative that will be carried into the



future and the Early Years Project enabled MAM to capture the recent history of MAM forever, which I know will be a rich resource and will be greatly appreciated by future Trustees.

I should add that Janet does have a particularly soft spot for our Education Ministries. One recognises this when one sees Janet at a stewardship visit to one of our colleges and the easy way she connects with the teachers and in particular the students there.

Whilst we will miss Janet, we wish her all the best for the future and hopefully she will now have more time to spend with her husband Col, especially travelling in Australia.

Thank you, Janet, for your selfless contribution to MAM and we all wish you the very best for the future.

**Mr Richard Haddock AO**  
*Chair, Mary Aikenhead Ministries*



# OPEN SUPPORT

'Agape' love is more than an emotion. It is a sentiment that demonstrates itself through actions.

In the creation of her ministry, the Venerable Mary Aikenhead was well aware of the growing community need in Ireland for 'agape' love. In Bishop Polding's plea to Mary to send her Congregation of Sisters to Australia, he recognised that we needed it. And in the creation of St Vincent's Open Support, the Sisters identified a group of people, often overlooked, that desperately needed it too. Their legacy of demonstrating love for their fellow human beings, and in particular those who were vulnerable, with unmet need, continues to be at the forefront of our mission at Open Support.

Building on the charism and traditions of the Sisters of Charity to serve the poor and vulnerable in the community, Open Support's programs are available to women and children escaping domestic violence (DFV), particularly those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and helping socially isolated adults to build capacity in their community.

*"I went somewhere else before and it wasn't like this.....they really care"*

Open Support DSV client



One in six women have experienced violence by an intimate partner<sup>1</sup> and domestic violence incidents reported to the police increased 3% annually over the past 5 years<sup>2</sup>. Last year Open Support provided accommodation and support services to 32 women and 41 children escaping from DFV. 31 out of 32 women have now settled into their own homes and have found jobs or are attending education.



Thanks to the wrap-around, client-centred, strength-based approach, and skilled and understanding staff, Open Support were able to assist these women to find that inner strength and confidence that they needed to take this next brave step in their journey. They are carried by 'agape' love. In mid-2023, Open Support will be expanding this program and will open a new crisis accommodation facility, essentially tripling their impact in the community.

*"I feel very comfortable and included."*

Open Support SI client

COVID taught many of us for the first time what it means to be socially isolated. Sadly, it is an ongoing reality, with 25% of Australians saying they are experiencing loneliness with a cost of \$2.7 billion of Australia's health expenditure going towards loneliness related ill health<sup>3</sup>. Open Support's Social Isolation program has had life changing effects on many of its participants. Our caring staff and volunteers take the time to truly listen to their clients and assist them in creating meaningful, ongoing connections within their local communities, based on their interests and needs.

Open Support couldn't achieve everything they do without their volunteer team that is instrumental in supporting our clients. From volunteer driving and phone support, to volunteering in our gift shop or fundraising, our reach is wider and filled with more love, because of this amazing team of people.

If you feel moved to continue in the charism of these courageous women, visit our website to see how you can get involved in supporting those who are often overlooked at [opensupport.org.au](https://opensupport.org.au). Whether it be through volunteering or donating, you can contribute to continuing our mission and spreading some 'agape' love.

Ms Kate Viviers

Chief Executive Officer, Open Support

<sup>1</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2018

<sup>2</sup> NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics & Research 2018 - 2022

<sup>3</sup> Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre, the 'Stronger Together: Loneliness and social connectedness in Australia

# ST VINCENT'S CARE MITCHELTON 30TH ANNIVERSARY

On 17 May 2023 St Vincent's Mitchelton Aged Care Facility celebrated 30 years as a Catholic aged care facility.

The beautiful liturgy was attended by residents and staff and presided over by Bishop Ken Howell, who has recently been appointed as Bishop of Toowoomba.

**Mr Gary Humphrys**  
*Trustee, Mary Aikenhead Ministries*



Residents & Staff of St Vincent's Care Mitchelton Aged Care



Bishop Ken Howell leading a liturgical celebration



Mr Gary Humphrys, Trustee

## NGINDA, NGAYI, NGALI (YOU, ME, US) ELDERS EXHIBITION LAUNCH

On Monday 26 June 2023 I joined Sr Clare Nolan, Archbishop Mark Coleridge, Mrs Darlene Dreise, Mr Lincoln Hopper, Ms Prue Densley, Mr Troy Tornabene, Mr Oli Steele GAICD, Mr Richard Lentfer, Dr Christiaan Jacobs-Vandegheer, Dcn Peter Pellicaan, and colleagues from St Vincent's Care, St Vincent's Health Australia, and the Archdiocese of Brisbane to celebrate the opening of the Nginda, Ngayi, Ngali (You, Me, Us) Celebrating Reconciliation, together Art Exhibition.



A fantastic exhibition of Indigenous art at the Francis Rush Centre, St Stephen's Cathedral (June 2023) as part of St Vincent's Care's Reconciliation Action Plan in partnership with Evangelisation Brisbane. The four paintings (and thumb prints) pictured below will be displayed at various healthcare sites across Brisbane.

**Prof. Michael Drew**  
*Trustee, Mary Aikenhead Ministries*



Prof. Michael Drew and Sr Clare Nolan pictured with Archbishop Mark Coleridge



# MAM CONFERENCE (MAY 2023)

The first Mary Aikenhead Ministries Conference in four years was held at the Amora Hotel in Sydney on 11 and 12 May 2023.

We were truly blessed to have with us a significant number of Sisters of Charity whose presence lifted all of us.

In curating the conference program, the Trustees were mindful that the world had changed since 2019 and that there had been a flow-on impact of changes across our ministries; and those impacts continue to influence our mission and workplaces.

We were also aware of the many new people at governance, executive and leadership levels who had joined Mary Aikenhead Ministries since 2019.

It certainly was the hope of the Trustees that the conference would touch everyone's hearts and minds and that they would leave affirmed, challenged, and inspired in their respective ministry.

There were three components that were chosen to form the narrative of the conference program.

1. Making our history - who we are and how did we get here?
2. Australia: Context and Challenges
3. MAM for today and tomorrow.

Interwoven in these three strands was our Conference Companion Fr Frank Brennan SJ AO, who offered us his insights and challenges on the learnings of the conference.

We were also proud to launch the Inaugural Mary Aikenhead Ministries Oration.



It was wonderful to have a diverse range of speakers, including both local and international, and we intend, where possible, to put these presentations onto our website in the near future.

A highlight of the Conference for many was our coming together at the end of day 1 to celebrate a beautiful Mass in the historic St Patrick's Church, which happens to also be the oldest surviving Catholic Church in NSW. Our Mission and Formation Director, Louwana Saba and her team of volunteers excelled in leading us in such faith filled liturgies throughout the course of the whole conference.

Following the conference, we sought feedback from the delegates, and we are truly grateful for everyone who took the time to provide their feedback on both what they found uplifting and what they found disappointing. It was all constructive and we will truly endeavor to learn from those things which some of you highlighted that can make our next conference even better.

It seems a great many participants thoroughly enjoyed the showcasing of our ministries and just about everyone appreciated and valued Father Frank Brennans' analysis and challenges contained in his summation of the conference.





A number were disappointed that there was little table discussion after each presentation and the Trustees will reflect carefully on these comments regarding overseas speakers as well as the technological challenges that poses when the presentation is on-line.

However, our intention is that the conference is a journey – our history, how we got here, what ‘here’ in Australia looks like for society and the Church (as we are a work of the Church) and then looking to the broader world and then the future. We pray that the conference continues as each participant takes back to their workplace the call to consider our story in the context of these times and looking to the future. Just as the work the sisters commenced in the 1980s prepared the way for the PJP, and the work to create the PJP prepared what we are now able to do.

It is by the work we do today that we will continue to be a ministry that flourishes in the decades to come. Hopefully people will share the conference with others, think about what they heard, consider what challenged them and understand that what we do today sets us up for tomorrow.

Caritas Christi Urget Nos!

**Mr Gary Humphrys**

*Trustee, Mary Aikenhead Ministries*



Trustees of Mary Aikenhead Ministries (front row) pictured with Sisters of Charity







# INAUGURAL VENERABLE MARY AIKENHEAD ORATION (MAY 2023)

This year during our Conference we held our inaugural Venerable Mary Aikenhead Oration. The idea for this Oration began as a seed that grew over many years. Our hope was that in creating the Mary Aikenhead Oration we would seek to share her more widely and create a deeper understanding of the charism and founding story of Mary Aikenhead and the Religious Sisters of Charity. We must know and honour this important spiritual legacy that has inspired, served and helped to shape the Catholic Church across the world and particularly in Australia. In examining our times accompanied by the story of Mary Aikenhead, we hope to contribute to the intellectual life of the Australian Church and continue her legacy.

The Oration was given on Thursday 11 May 2023, by Dr Bernadette Tobin and a response was provided by Dr Xavier Symons.

Bernadette Tobin is a renowned bioethicist and philosopher who has made significant contributions to ethical debates and progress in Australia. Bernadette has worked closely with the health sector, most especially in her role as Director of The Plunkett Centre for Ethics. Dr Xavier Symons is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Human Flourishing Program at Harvard's Institute for Quantitative Social Science. Xavier's research interests include ethical issues at the beginning and end of life, conscientious objection, ethical issues in aged care, and pandemic ethics.

The topic chosen by Bernadette was a quote by Venerable Mary Aikenhead: "Do pray that justice may be accomplished in peace and that truth may prevail." The Oration explored the question of: what attitude should a healthy, pluralist, liberal, democratic society take to healthcare institutions which will not perform socially controversial but legally permissible practices such as abortion and euthanasia? Xavier's response focused on the fundamental orientation that Catholic institutions, and in particular, Catholic schools have toward the common good.



We were fortunate to be able to live stream the event, and had many guests join online and in-person. Our hope is that the Venerable Mary Aikenhead Oration will continue in years to come, and the legacy and inspiration of Mary Aikenhead will continue to reach a broader audience.

If you would like to watch the 2023 Inaugural Oration or for a copy of the presentations please visit our website [here](#)

**Mrs Louwana Saba**  
*Mission & Formation Director,  
Mary Aikenhead Ministries*



Dr Bernadette Tobin



Dr Xavier Symons

# IRISH PILGRIMAGE (JUNE 2023)

In June, after a few years of hiatus, the Trustees of Mary Aikenhead Ministries keenly welcomed and led a pilgrimage group to Ireland. The group included leaders from across our health and education ministries, with friends from the Sisters of Charity Australia community.

Below are two highlights taken from their travels. These reflections were written by the pilgrims during their time in Ireland. For more of the updates, photos, and reflections of this time together, please visit the [Mary Aikenhead Ministries LinkedIn page](#).



Pilgrims pictured outside of Mary Aikenhead's residence 1798-1812

## REFLECTION OF MAM PILGRIM, MR BOB ANDERSON ON VISITING THE MARY AIKENHEAD HERITAGE CENTRE IN DUBLIN

"Today we had the opportunity to connect with part of the physical origin of the Sisters' story with a visit to the Heritage Centre.

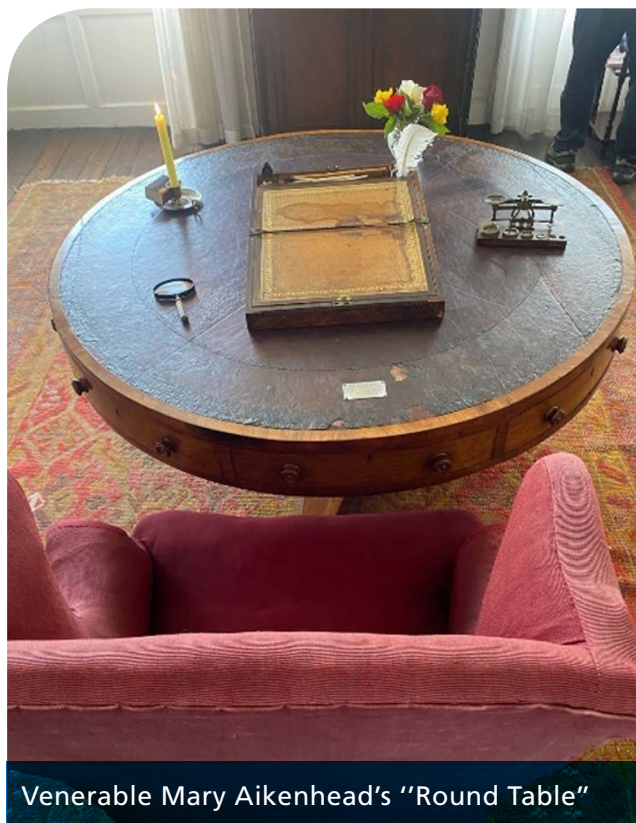
Moreover it was a touchstone to the essence and spirit of Mary Aikenhead herself. The counterweight to the joy of such an experience is the personal challenge to grasp the closest edge of the mission to each of us.

Where is our courage to get in our Francis Spaight's with no solid land under our feet for months on end and be in the middle of the ocean, thousands of miles from anywhere, and not be able to swim?

When do we rely on providence in the face of all around us advising of a lack of consensus for any degree of claim for responsible stewardship to build what is needed for those in need?

Does our own faith have the vision to recognise and respond to the face of Christ in the vulnerable, undesirable and marginalised?

In essence, the inspiration of this morning was the realisation that the Church doesn't have a mission... the Mission has a church."



Venerable Mary Aikenhead's "Round Table"



Religious Sisters of Charity with Pilgrims  
Melinda Jolly and Chris Raeside



A pilgrim reflection at the 'Round Table'.  
L-R: Michael Drew, Margaret McKenna, Bob Anderson, Sheila McGregor, and Melinda Jolly



## REFLECTION OF MAM PILGRIM, MS JUDY CHRISTIE, ON VISITING VENERABLE MARY AIKENHEAD'S GRAVE IN DONNYBROOK

"A Rose for Mary. Today we each placed a rose at the grave of a truly remarkable woman, the Venerable Mary Aikenhead.

A woman of strength, compassion and wisdom. A woman who had total faith in divine providence, in order to be of service to the poor.

Many women have since followed in Mary's footsteps as Sisters of Charity, giving service to the poor in many countries around the world.

It was truly humbling to take part in the blessing of graves at Donnybrook Cemetery, knowing the legacy left by Mary Aikenhead and the Sisters of Charity.

May our journey here to Ireland and to that sacred place, renew in each of us our endeavour to live a life worthy of that legacy."



Pilgrims enjoying dinner together



Trustee, Penelope Wright at Kilmainham Gaol, Dublin



L-R: Penelope Wright and Judy Christie



Pilgrims at Foxford, L-R: Sheila McGregor, Chris Raeside, John Willis, Debbie Brock, and Erwin Loh



Centennarian Sister of Charity - Sr Christina with Sr Libbey Byrne





Trinity College fans.  
L-R: Nicole Tweddle, Erwin Loh, and Julia Lawrence



Visit to the library and Book of Kells - Trinity College Dublin. L-R: Nicole Tweddle, Sheila McGregor, and Erwin Loh



Pilgrim, Nicole Tweddle in the Labyrinth at 'The Sanctuary' - established by Sr Stanislaus Kennedy



By the seaside  
L-R: Julia Lawrence, Erwin Loh, Nicole Tweddle, John Willis, Debbie Brock, and Chris Raeside



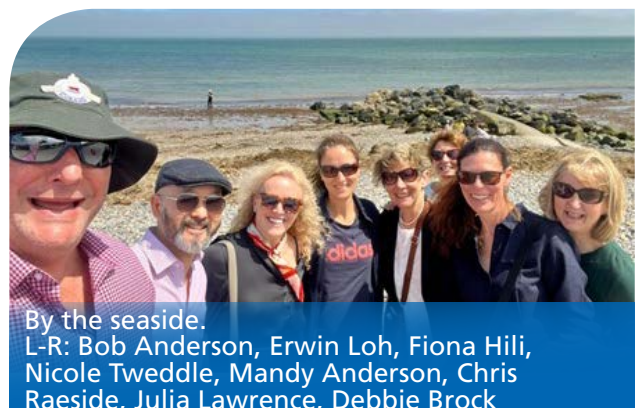
Forty Foot Swimmers.  
L-R: John Willis, Michael Drew, Sheila McGregor, Julia Lawrence, and Chris Raeside



Sr Libbey Byrne at the memorial grave side for the Sisters of Charity.



Melinda Jolly, John Willis, and Erwin Loh



By the seaside.  
L-R: Bob Anderson, Erwin Loh, Fiona Hili, Nicole Tweddle, Mandy Anderson, Chris Raeside, Julia Lawrence, Debbie Brock



# PALLIATIVE CARE

People, relationships, love and saying farewell in a context of palliative care is full of personal emotions especially when it is someone close to you.

My dearest wife died in 1990...as many of us know it seems like yesterday, 33 years ago. As family, we had cared for Michele at home for three years. We were only married for six years and the last three were especially hard. Yet, full of love. Indeed, Chele was so often the leader who supported us to keep the joy in each day. The community nurses and her Professor ensured she received the palliative care needed, the transfusions, some radiotherapy and medications. They also built relationships with her through their shared love and care. Michele had been given three months to live in 1988 with a diagnosis of Grawitz tumour (kidney) with metastasis on the spine. Instead of three months Michele lived a full life (with her limitations) for three years. Lunches out, ambulance trips to Botanical Gardens, new babies, birthdays and countless visits from family and friends. The support and palliative care given, to us all, enabled Chele to stay at home. The services were supplied through a Sydney public hospital with love and care foundational.

Now, forward 33 years, people of all ages still wish to be 'at home' wherever that may be for them at this time of their lives. It is a choice many choose ... indeed desire.

My Uncle Bob is 95 living in an aged care centre and being supported by St Vincent's Palliative Care. The excellence, love, respect and dignity is core to the care he receives. He says he has had a great life, amazed to have made it to 95 and



still has words he whispers to his visitors in these his last days. This is his choice. For the family, the communication and the monitoring of his daily condition by Drs and the aged care staff support us as well as Uncle. A photo of Uncle (June 6, 2023), shows his transistor in his hand as he waves to an incoming visitor. He likes to keep engaged in what's going on.

St Vincent's has a 100+ years of delivering support and palliative care. Nurses have at their core love and care for their patients at all phases of life. Support and Palliative care nurses and Drs bring with them to every person and their families a sense of peace and calm in most difficult times.

To all those involved in Support and Palliative care across St Vincent's hospitals and aged care may Christ's blessings and graces continue to guide YOUR excellence, love and integrity that you bring into the lives of people.

[A/Prof. Peter Howard](#)

*Trustee, Mary Aikenhead Ministries*



# THE FACES OF MAM

## YVONNE BONOMO

Director

Department of Addiction Medicine  
St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne

**Which of the organisations within Mary Aikenhead Ministries do you work for, and how long have you been there?**

Most of my career has been at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne, from medical student to becoming an Addiction Physician and eventually Director of the Department of Addiction Medicine, only interrupted when working overseas and having four children.

**The MAM values are love, justice, compassion, hope. Which of these resonates most with you and why?**

My favourite MAM value is 'compassion' because concern for others struggling with addiction underpins our work – we imagine ourselves in their shoes and help as best we can.

**What do you think sets your organization/ministry apart from other workplaces?**

Our work as an institution is special! So often, staff will 'go the extra mile' be it for a patient or to support a colleague, because it's an unspoken truism at St Vincent's! Our team in Addiction Medicine balance work with 'down time', sharing meals, having cake (any reason will do) and sharing lots of laughs! We love working with junior staff and even after they move on to other areas of Medicine, they often drop in to visit, send us photos of places they're working or travelling or even better, send pictures of their newborn babies!



**If you were to have lunch with Venerable Mary Aikenhead today, what story would you tell her about your work?**

Having lunch with the Venerable Mary Aikenhead would be awesome! I would share our challenges and often heartbreaking vulnerability we witness - physical and mental ill-health, broken relationships with family, friends, loss of employment, housing. I am always mindful of preventing 'burnout' in our hard-working team, and her perspective would be invaluable. The Sisters of Charity would have worked long hard days, with fewer resources than we have.

**What do you think she might say to you in reply?**

In terms of her response, my impression of the Venerable Mary Aikenhead is that she'd be quite matter of fact and likely quote what is posted on a wall at our hospital: "Even when you are the best, you desire to be more...to go beyond!" Hmmm...that's one inspiring, no-nonsense taskmaster!



# THE FACES OF MAM

## HELEN PAVLIDIS

Resource Centre Manager  
Catholic Ladies' College

Which of the organisations within Mary Aikenhead Ministries do you work for, and how long have you been there?

Catholic Ladies' College, 10 Years

The MAM values are love, justice, compassion, hope. Which of these resonates most with you and why?

While each of these values help to shape our thoughts words and actions, I feel that Hope is vital because it fuels motivation and resilience and the belief that a better future is possible. Hope stops us from giving in to despair, helps us to face difficulties, pursue dreams and find meaning and fulfillment in our lives.

What do you think sets your organization/ministry apart from other workplaces?

The strong sense of community at CLC provides a feeling of belonging for students and staff; it is a welcoming and inclusive community that puts everyone's well-being at the heart of everything we do.

If you were to have lunch with Venerable Mary Aikenhead today, what story would you tell her about your work?

Rather than telling her about my work in the Resource Centre, I would love to invite Venerable Mary Aikenhead in and show her the space and the work that we do. I think she would be surprised to see how much the role of the library has changed over the years and what a vibrant community hub it is. She would see for herself that the Resource Centre is a welcoming, inclusive, and safe space that encourages collaboration, exploration and creation and that it is as much a learning space as it is a social space.



At one end of the room she may see students reading a book or working on a group project while over in the MakerSpace students may be engaged in some coding or some knitting; in front of the large TV screen other students may be competing in a Mario Kart challenge. She would be delighted to hear Book Club members passionately discussing their books or she may read some of the outrageous plots Writers' Club members have devised, and they would love to tell her about their participation in the Write A Book In A Day challenge. Meanwhile, year 7 students would enjoy telling her about their Human Library experience at CLC and all that they learnt about the history of the college by borrowing a 'human book.'

It would be my hope that she may experience for herself the vibrancy students bring into the space, how they energise us and remind us daily why we love what we do.

# MAM HAS A NEW ADDRESS

## WE HAVE MOVED

MONDAY  
June 26th



### NEW LOCATION

From Monday 26 June 2023  
our offices will be located at:

Suite 103, Level 1  
26-30 Spring Street  
Bondi Junction NSW 2022

Our telephone number remains unchanged



MARY  
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