



# Newsletter for the Province of Asia-Pacific

The Third Order, Society of St Francis

[www.tssf.org.au](http://www.tssf.org.au)

Francistide 2022

## A passionate presence

Mandy Wheatley  
Provincial Minister

Dear sisters and brothers,

Francistide blessings to you as I write from the Old Monastery in Stroud, NSW.

It is easy to forget it is here, when life gets busy and we become engulfed in our own world's affairs. None the less, there is a beating heart of prayer in the silence of the chapels and sounds of the bush here, which has been a home to Franciscan spirituality in Australia for more than four decades.

This is where brothers Bruce Paul, Alfred and Christopher John live in the Hermitage, and where the Rev'd Rebecca Newland is staying in the Guesthouse of the Monastery to pray and contemplate. We are holding the vision of keeping a presence of prayer, study and work alive as we stay on site throughout the year. To find out more about visiting or staying, contact the number on the website below and please pray for this beautiful place to continue to thrive.

To read more see:

<https://tinyurl.com/Stroud-History>

Prayer Study and Work is the theme of Jeff Golliher's exciting book *The Franciscan*



*The Rev'd Nicholas Whereat in the 'detention centre' he will take to St John's Cathedral, Brisbane. The small sign on the vertical pole, like the one on Jesus' cross, shows a man's identity: MEG 45 and his 'crime': seeking asylum. See page 3 for story.*

*Forms of Service. Hopeful Reflections in a Perilous Time.*

It has been the focus of a small team of us who are hoping to bring you a study guide for individual or group study in 2023. Our prayer is that it will become part of our Province's Lifelong Formation development.

As individuals, our work on social justice and creation care issues, both locally and globally, have caused many of us prayerful

concern. In such matters as the plight of refugees and the homeless, reconciliation with indigenous peoples and climate change, should we approach this work only as individual Franciscans, as groups or as an organisation?

We may be a community in dispersion but that doesn't make us less passionate. A great number of individual Franciscans have been, and still are involved in many areas, even though it seems people don't see tertiaries doing these things together, or having a united voice.

Sharing your stories in our Newsletter – stories of social action, achievements and what motivates you – encourages everyone to take action.

We might not all agree on where or how to speak out; however, we can often address these topics in our meetings, as the group in Melbourne did in July, with a workshop on ethical clothing choices. Please write and send your stories in to Jan Down so that we can encourage each other as individuals, and reflect and pray together.

We joyfully welcome our new Regional Ministers who began their first three-year term on August 1<sup>st</sup> 2022. Michael Down replaces Colin Valentine (VIC/TAS), Jeannie Minnis replaces Roselind Ruwaldt (SA), Graham John Warren replaces Nicholas Whereat (QLD B/N NSW – North) and Carolyn Smith replaces Keith Slater (QLD B/N NSW – South).

We thank Graham Miller (QLD A) for continuing in his role until early next year.

Our retiring Regional Ministers have worked so hard during Covid for their Regions. By faithfully keeping in touch with many isolated tertiaries, and gently holding and pastorally caring for the Third Order, they have strengthened the faith of many of our beautiful Franciscan family.

For those Regional Ministers who remain on Chapter – Fran Hansen (NSW A), Anne Wilson (WA), +Godfrey Fryar (Region in formation); for our Provincial Chaplain, Gemma Dashwood; Sally Buckley (Assistant Provincial Minister), David White (Communications Officer) and John Blakemore (Secretary) and our wonderful TSSF Treasurers, Glenys McCarrick and Jane Noller – bless you all. Please remember to keep them in your prayers.

## NOTES:

### ANNUAL REPORTS and RENEWAL OF VOWS

Francistide is a blessed time for Renewal of Vows. Please join your local area group or ask your Regional Minister to help organise your Renewal.

All Professed and Novices are to send their reports to their respective Regional Minister by November 15.

### PROFESSION AND ELECTION TO PROFESSION:

Craig Bydder and Bev Antipas (WA).  
Approved for profession: Queenie Victor and Rachel Selvaraj (Sri Lanka),  
Louise Townend (SA)

### REQUEST FOR RELEASE FROM VOWS

Dayalan Saminathan (Sri Lanka)  
Pearl McGill (WA)  
Terry Gatfield (QLDB/NNSW)  
Myriam Nyrene (QLDB/NNSW)  
Rae Morey (QLDB/NNSW)  
Suzanne Hayes (NSW A)

### REST IN PEACE

Clare White (NSW B/ACT)

Welcome and farewell to all those dear Third Order members.

With God's blessings of peace and goodwill,

Mandy tssf  
Provincial Minister



# Lamenting Nine Years of Detention

Nicholas Whereat tssf

I am planning to keep a nine day fast from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> September, as a Lament for the Nine Years of Detention for those who have been caught up in the off-shore processing system.

I feel a deep sadness for the way those seeking asylum and refuge in Australia have been treated. The nine day fast will take place on the steps of St John's Cathedral in Brisbane.

I am conscious that most detainees still live in a limbo detention space with no real or lasting solution. My hope and prayer is that the people of Australia will urgently seek a real and lasting solution for the 1380 people still stuck in the Offshore Processing System. I believe we have failed to keep the basic tenets of the Refugee Convention that Australia signed up to after the Second World War.

The final full day of the fast, September 11, is significant as it will be the 21st anniversary of the destruction of the Twin Towers in New York. I believe the overwhelming fear generated on that day led to very unhealthy attitudes towards those seeking asylum, especially if they came from the Middle east.

I pray that the Albanese Government and the people of Australia will also abolish temporary protection policy as quickly as possible, to enable the 19,000 refugees affected to fully embrace the opportunity to make a life-long contribution to Australia. Many, many Australians would be happy to be part of Refugee Sponsor Programmes like those in Canada enabling the pledge by the Labor Government to accept 27,000 refugees per year.

Australia continues to be enriched by the 90,000 refugees who have come to Australia in the past 75 years. It is time we, as a nation, had a change of heart and turned away from

policies that dehumanise those seeking asylum.

Let us graciously welcome refugees, giving them the support they invariably need to settle into this wonderful land so that they may join us in its bounty.

I have never fasted longer than 40 hours before. Even that included barley sugar lollies. The decision to fast one day for each year people have been held in detention arose during the Third Order Franciscan conference a few years ago. Doing it then would have been easier with only six days. The idea didn't go away. But it took a while to trust that this mad idea was a call from the Holy Spirit.

I would appreciate prayer support from my Franciscan brothers and sisters. Franciscans living locally may like to keep the fast with me for a few hours during the nine days. Some may be happy to keep me company overnight as the Cathedral Chapter feels it is safer to have two people at night. I have a roster for those staying overnight. For those further afield you can join me in Morning Prayer via Zoom at 8 am each day (starting Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> Sept) and Evening Prayer at 5pm. Here are the links.

## **Morning Prayer:**

<https://tinyurl.com/2p89v22p>

## **Evening Prayer:**

<https://tinyurl.com/3rk99pu7>

Contact me if you would like to join the overnight roster. Ph 0423 030 326



*Nicholas Whereat*



# Make me a Channel of your Peace

Philip Thirlwell tssf

March 12, 2014

From: Philip Thirlwell, *Swallows and Swimmers*  
*Re-printed with permission of Margaret Thirlwell*

Stroud:

Trees: tall and still, no calm-disturbing breeze.

Sky: blue with clouds, a postcard scene.

Peace.

Syria:

Warfare reigns, all pervasive.

Gunfires burst. Red sky reflects spilt blood,

And children moan – too weak to plead for

bread.

Stroud:

Human voices stilled

Only birdsong breaks the silence,

No serpent mars this Eden.

Manus Island:

Suspicion joins with heat and mud,

Injustice burdens hearts and minds,

A seething madness, barely quenched.

Stroud:

This short time of bliss and joy,

Fed in body, and in mind,

Freed from cares, with soul refreshed.

Gaza:

Cornered, confined, restricted:

Retaliation beckons – retribution follows;

No hope for the child, either living or dead.

Stroud:

Paradise engenders peace,

While others suffer, live and die.

How can I a channel be

To bring them hope and love and peace?



*At the Old Monastery, Stroud*





# Third Order Franciscans in Sri Lanka

Saroja Namadevan tssf



*Relief work at Lool Kandura Tea Estate in Sri Lanka. Photo sent by Brother Michael Saminathan SSF*

Sri Lanka, once a prosperous nation popularly known as “The Pearl of the Indian Ocean”, is now passing through a phase where its economy is facing serious problems after the sequences of civil war, pandemic and now the economic downfall.

The country is unable to pay its foreign debts and is finding it difficult to import essential food items, lifesaving medicines, fertilizer, fuel and so on. Hospitals have postponed surgeries and a few have closed. The fuel crisis has compelled a reduction in the number of working days and schools have temporarily closed. The lack of fertilizer has caused a huge set back in agriculture, including the tea plantations.

With the rapidly rising inflation, prices of food, medicine and consumer items have shot up two and threefold. The unemployed and the lower income groups, consisting of about 65

percent of the population, are now under the poverty line and finding it difficult to find even a square meal a day, resulting in malnutrition. People standing in long queues, sometimes overnight, on the streets to obtain essential items that are in short supply, are a common sight; news reports say at least 26 people have died staying in queues for long hours.

On top of this, the recent floods and landslides have caused further disaster.

In the midst of these, the Third Order Franciscans, by the grace of God, have been able to respond in bringing relief and comfort to many who are suffering. Our Sisters and Brothers have acted as coordinators in distributing relief in different areas with great responsibility.

**Flood relief:** Grocery packs were distributed to flood victims and stationery items were

gifted to 250 students who had lost their belongings in the floods and earth-slips.

**Medical Relief:** Valuable items of medical equipment were gifted to 15 rural government hospitals which had a short supply of the above.

**Poverty Relief:** Together with the First Order Franciscans, we were able to distribute dry ration packs to 13,000 families in neglected tea plantation areas in Gampola, Nawalapitiya, Hatton, Wariyagala, Matale and Madulkelle, where helpless people live in abject poverty and receive minimal or no assistance from the state.

**Educational and Scholarships Program:** 900 students in rural and plantation schools were gifted with all requirements of stationery. Four more deserving students have been added to the Students' Full Scholarship Program at Mowbray College, Kandy, supported by the Franciscan community, making a total of ten.

**Thanks:** We were able to make these significant contributions together with the First Order, mainly due to the contributions made by: The Anglican Communion Compass Society; Anglican Aid Abroad; and a few friends from Korea, Sri Lanka, India and Australia, for which we are very grateful.

The Franciscans in Sri Lanka with total commitment to the Lord Jesus will continue to serve the people, following in the footsteps of St Francis and St Clare.

## Franciscans International

Blair Matheson

*Reprinted with permission, from Tau, May 2022*

Franciscans International (FI) has been in action for over 33 years as a non-government organisation (NGO). The main role is advocacy of basic human rights for the marginalised, vulnerable and those who have no voice.

FI works with Franciscans at grass roots level where there are issues around provision for these basic rights or abuses of human rights which are part of what countries have signed up to through the United Nations (UN) Council.

Over the years wonderful and powerful work has been achieved on behalf of many people; hence FI has the highest level of consultative status to the UN economic and social council.

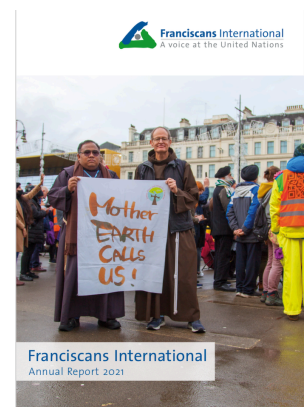
Currently there is a global effort via the UN to have a standard of operation for all global companies and corporations. This would help ensure illegal land clearance and logging situations, like our sisters and brothers in the Solomon Islands endure, would be monitored and governments and companies called to account.

FI has also recently been part of the collaborative process in advocating for special "rapporteur" (reporter) to the UN on human rights in the context of climate change.

FI is part of our global Franciscan family and it is great that tssf is able to support their work financially and through ongoing prayer. It is an honour being the Anglican Franciscan representative along with the other board members and staff to be part of the process of change for good.

One of this year's highlights in late April was to be able to attend the board meetings in Geneva face to face instead of by Zoom and meeting the people that have been working together for nearly three years without meeting face to face.

Please pray for this ongoing work, the safety of those who advocate and for wisdom in how to "open" the eyes of the world to life for those who have no voice.



*Franciscans International Annual Report 2021, recently released; available at:*

<https://tinyurl.com/bdexamve>

*To donate to Franciscans International any time of year, use the tssf subscription form available under Resources at:*

<https://tssf.org.au/>



# A friend to refugees

## An interview with Sandra Jackson tssf

Carrying her baby in a papoose, a young Australian woman is out door-knocking, collecting money for Austcare, in support of refugees.

This is Melbourne in 1971, and the woman is Victorian tertiary, Sandra Jackson. Sandra, now 80, has befriended and assisted refugees and migrants for over 50 years.

In New Zealand in the 1980s Sandra's church sponsored two refugee families from Indo-China, following the Vietnam War. Sandra was involved in practical ways, helping them to settle into the community. She also did a crash course in teaching ESL, and was then able to teach them English while visiting these young families in their homes.

Sandra enjoyed this work so much that when she returned to Australia in 1988, she enrolled in a Grad Dip TESOL, and then taught English to refugees and migrants through AMES for 10 years.

Through the Uniting Church, Sandra also completed a training course to provide social support and friendship to refugees. She was then put in touch with a young married couple from Myanmar. When the wife, Irene, became pregnant, Sandra went with her to her outpatient appointments at Box Hill Hospital, eventually attending the birth. This family became part of Sandra's family, and the three children call her Grandma.

As she was less needed for practical help, Sandra's involvement in advocacy for refugees increased. She wrote letters to MPs and attended the Palm Sunday Walks in Melbourne. And she has been particularly involved with Grandmothers for Refugees, joining from the group's very beginning in



*Victorian tertiaries at a rally for refugees outside the Park 'Prison' Hotel, where some of the Medevac asylum seekers were being detained.*

*L-R: Catherine de Ron, Colin Valentine, Sandra Jackson and the Rev'd Pirrial Clift*

2014 when it was called Grandmothers against Detention of Refugee Children.

Sandra believes "Australia, with its high standard of living, has a moral responsibility to take a much greater share of the millions of refugees worldwide who are seeking safety and a new life. Instead, in recent years, with its cruel bipartisan policy of off-shore detention, our government has relied on Australia being an island continent to shut out asylum seekers. By contrast, Lebanon, a poorer country, has been burdened with huge numbers of Syrian refugees – equal to around a quarter of its population – pouring across its land borders."

What motivates Sandra to care so much, and to take action? The Second Aim of TSSF is very important to her, and she loves the old wording, with 'fraternitas' – seeing all people and creation as children of God and therefore our brothers and sisters.



# Francis and trees

Charles Ringma tssf

In whatever direction one wishes to gaze, looking at St Francis opens a wide world.

One can reflect on the beauty of the Trinity. One can be amazed at the humility of the Babe in the manger. One can attempt to rebuild the house of faith. One can kiss the leper. One can embark on a life of peacemaking. One can be involved in inter-faith dialogue. One can live the challenge of community. One can be a person of prayer. One can live joyfully in the midst of suffering. And one can sing of the magnificence of God.

But, one can also plant trees.

At the back of our house in Brisbane is a bushland nature corridor which links to Grange Forest Park. This corridor has been long neglected, is full of weeds, and has suffered from erosion.

For the past twenty years, I have built up a forest floor, removed the weeds, and planted rain forest trees suitable for this area. Besides various varieties of Ficus, my favourite trees are the deciduous Red Gum and White Gum, and the Blackbean carefully nurtured by my fellow tertiary, Mac Campbell, who has the greenest fingers in the world!

Every afternoon, for an hour or so, I enter this sacred space to weed, mulch, and plant. It has become an integral part of my life. My communion with nature is a communion with the creator God. And under the canopy of the trees, I am at peace and soon enter a posture of wonderment, thanksgiving, and prayer.

Many a time, this patch of bush has been a healing place for me. Here I can acknowledge frustrations about failure in justice projects, engage my concerns about members of my extended family, express my disquiet about our world, and pray for future generations.



*Sacred space: the bushland nature corridor at the back of Charles Ringma's house*

And the trees keep on growing, breathing, giving shade, and providing a place for birds, scrub turkeys, snakes, lizards, and bandicoots.

St Francis is a rich resource in the life of faith and in the following of Jesus. And that life of faith can be as practical as digging a hole to plant a tree.

*Charles Ringma, tssf, is the author of Chase Two Horses, Sabbath Time, and When All Else Fails.*