

Anglican Trust for Women and Children – History

Our story is a rich tapestry that entwines courageous and compassionate work of dedicated Anglicans who ministered to those who had the least, often against high odds and in the face of criticism and financial constraints.

The Beginnings

Auckland in the late 1850s was a hard-drinking, tough pioneer city in a colony troubled by the Land Wars. Schooling was not an automatic right, many children died from disease, were put out to work or were abandoned by their parents.

In 1858 the Church established a cottage home in Grafton Rd for some of the many unwanted and neglected so-called street urchins. When this orphan's home was full, Bishop Selwyn arranged for it to move to Parnell to a much larger timber building on General Trust Board land.

In 1860, Dr Thomas Kenderdine and Archdeacon John Lloyd, vicar of St Paul's, met at the bedside of a widow dying of consumption who did not know what would become of her three children when she died. Archdeacon Lloyd and Dr Kenderdine used their own money to rent a cottage and pay a woman to live with and look after the three children. When the owner wanted the cottage back, they realised a properly constituted orphanage needed to be established.

Archdeacon Lloyd became the first secretary of the Orphans Home Trust and held this post until 1870 when he returned to England. His tireless work as secretary means he may fairly be considered the Founder of the Orphan's Home. Bishop Cowie, in his address to his first Synod in Auckland, described Archdeacon Lloyd as "full of mercy and good works".

Bishop and Mrs Cowie had arrived in New Zealand early in 1870 approximately 12 years after the Orphans' Home was established and Mrs Cowie willingly took on a leadership role of this flagship charity.

In 1884, concerned for the plight of young women "who had gone astray and desire to return to a virtuous life", Mrs Cowie established a Women's Home with help from Mrs Kinder, Mrs McCosh Clark, and Mrs Kenderdine. A committee was made up of Archdeacon Dudley, The Revs Hill and Walpole, with Mrs Cowie as Superintendent, and Mrs Kinder as secretary/Treasurer. Dr Kenderdine was appointed honorary medical officer.

In the spirit of the times, the women did the work and the men held the governance role. By 1890, Mrs Cowie had opened a Children's Home in Brighton Rd, providing care for babies and toddlers and a maternity facility for unmarried mothers.

In 1894 the Mission to the Streets and Lanes and the Order of the Good Shepherd were founded to do mission and "Rescue Work" in the mean little alleys off Grey St where the housing conditions were appalling.

By now the aging Mrs Cowie was less able to do rescue work. However she joined the committee of the Mission. The Good Shepherd sisters provided staff for the Mission as

well as at the Richmond Rd Orphans home and later the Brett Home and St Mary's Home.

Ahead of its time, the Mission recognised the need for social work training and a professional commitment over and above the women's earnest desire to work for the Kingdom of God.

The Institutional Years

On Sunday September 17, 1905, a fire broke out in the main wooden building of the Parnell Orphan's Home while the children were at church at St Mary's.

The central part of the building and the girls' dormitory were destroyed and the boys' dormitory was badly damaged after the fire started in the sewing room where the Matron had forgotten to turn off a gas ring after ironing her cuffs.

The girls were housed at Queen Victoria School and the boys slept in the gymnasium at St Stephen's School while temporary repairs were made but the home was a wreck.

The Orphan's Home Trust Board had no title to the land which it occupied rent free at the goodwill of the General Trust Board. There was a general feeling that the Home should not continue as a financial liability when the land it occupied could be leased. The Board also felt that, even though no one died in the fire, the old wooden buildings were unsuitable for housing large numbers of children.

The decision was made to buy land and build a new home. Despite strong objections, mainly because of its 11-mile distance from Auckland, Dr Wylie's 85-acre farm at Papatoetoe was purchased and a substantial brick orphanage was built there.

The purchase was financed by insurance (1,276 pounds), public appeal (7,500 pounds) and "borrowings from endowments as the cost of the new buildings greatly exceeded the amount anticipated".

Milestones of the Orphan's Home

- The foundation stone of the new buildings was laid in 1907 by his Excellency, the Governor, Lord Plunket.
- 1908 the home moved from Parnell to Papatoetoe.
- 1909 – accommodation planned for 100 children. A homelike atmosphere attempted – four buildings of 25 children in each.
- 1916 – after 56 years, 714 children had been admitted to the Home, of whom 645 had been placed in positions or otherwise provided for.
- 1918 – a foundation stone for a chapel was laid on the September 21, the Feast of St Matthew, and the chapel was opened and consecrated on March 1, 1919. This chapel was used for regular services and Sunday School for the children at the Home as well as neighbourhood children.
- 1920 – Diamond Jubilee. The Church Gazette of October 1920 comments on overcrowding:

“... large numbers due to the effect of the influenza epidemic following the Great War, some children have lost both parents, some are the children of soldiers; some applications have had to be declined because of lack of room. The Diocese has been asked to raise 15,000 pounds to complete the buildings according to the original drawings. The Board has asked the General secretary, The Rev'd W.E. Gillam, to visit every parish in the Diocese, preaching and lecturing to make the needs known. After 60 years of existence, the Orphans Home received only 227 pounds last year for its support from the whole Diocese. The cost of the upkeep of the home is about 2,900 pounds per year.

- May 1921 – First wedding at the Orphans Home chapel on Easter Tuesday, Miss Doris Pickett [late of Home staff] and Mr Walter Burton of Papatoetoe. The trust followed a time-honoured tradition and presented the couple with a bible.
- 1923 – stone of completion of the buildings was laid by the Governor General Viscount Jellicoe and dedicated by Archdeacon Averill. Comments recorded about the generous support of various parishes in the form of good clothing, shoes and sandals and gifts of garden produce.

World War One - Old Boys at the Front

From the 1918 Annual report:

“The Home is still being worthily represented at the Front. The Board proudly records the Award of the Military Medal to Reginald Sperry. Another Old Boy, Sydney Astley, took part in the operations resulting in the taking of Jerusalem and sent a postcard to the secretary from the Holy City. Fabian Sperry and John Turton have been invalided home after honourable service. The former was recently married and the Board is glad to convey their congratulations to the returned soldier and his bride. Arthur Cash was wounded last year and is likely to be invalided home.”

In 1924 Mr Marsac was appointed as the General Secretary. There was also a feeling that there was “constant danger of the Homes being misused by people who desire to escape their parental responsibilities. The long experience of Mr Marsac as a Police Officer should greatly assist the authorities in guarding against this kind of imposition. Mr Marsac has had exceptional experience in the matter of infant welfare. In 1895 he carried out an extensive inquiry in regard to ‘infant farming’ in Canterbury, and later when the Infant Life Protection Act of 1908 came into force, it was his duty to inspect registered homes. In a private capacity he has been associated with controlling of Anglican Homes in various parts of the country.....”

1925 Annual Report

- 67 children remain in the Orphans Home. There remain under the care of the Board 20 youths and 13 girls in employment who had not attained the age of 21 years. This will give some idea of the nature and scope of work which is being done. Some profit is made from the farm and garden connected to the Institution. The Home is supplied with milk, the surplus is sold. 12 cows on average are milked. The older boys are taught to milk before entering

employment outside the Home [from about 14 years]. Part of the meat is supplied for the home.

- Endowments – 1,300 per annum, considerable shortfall to be made up by subscriptions and donations.

1926 Annual Report

- Finances: Expenses exceed subscriptions. “A systematic canvas for subscriptions appears essential if receipts from this service are to continue satisfactory.
- Health: Ringworm – frequently a real problem. Influenza epidemic - Skill of the Matron and Dr Valentine in caring for the children and adults commended in the September Church Gazette. The difficulty of caring for sick children in an institution without an isolation facility is commented on frequently during the various annual reports.
- “The electric installation is now connected with the Auckland Electric Power Board Main and a motor is being installed for pumping. A considerable saving should thus be made.”
- Another heavy expenditure has been incurred in the cost of lighting which has been dependent on the use of an oil engine for producing electricity and in pumping water.

The Post-World War Two Years

Institutional-style care was to last for more than 50 years, encompassing two world wars and the Great Depression.

In *The Orphan Home* written by P.H. Woods and published in 1956, the author outlines reasons for being admitted to the home and the Board’s feeling that the wellbeing of children was paramount.

Reasons for Admission

- *Mother abandons home, husband and children*
- *Husband tries to manage by himself for a long stretch, grows desperate and ill in trying to do something that is beyond him.*
- *At last he applies to the one of the Homes to take his child or children, making a legal agreement with the Board which thus accepts full responsibility for the child and its welfare.*
- *A man leaves his wife and children with the same result. She cannot manage alone and mind them at the same time and there are no relatives able or willing to help,*
- *Other people separate and divorce and often neither can cope with their young.*
- *Drunkenness is another cause of family breakdown.*
- *Both parents have been known to abandon their children at once, leaving them to be found by the police and brought to us.*

“So all the children reach us with something awry, some emotional disturbance and stress which needs undoing and repair. Are any of the children true orphans? Yes, one is. All the others are from broken homes, some broken by the death of a parent.*

Some people say that it is not the business of the church to look after the children of separated or divorced people. If the church does not, who will? Others or the same people say that the State should take over all Homes for Children. Would the children thrive better than now?

Still others say that with the endless and unsatisfied demand for children for adoption that the Homes could well be emptied by this means. Anyone saying this has little knowledge of parents who either willingly or unwillingly place their children in care but can scarcely ever bring themselves to agree to others adopting them. Because of this, many children miss going to many fine people.”

Child's Wellbeing

“Though the Trust Board accepts the responsibility for a child, it is willing at any time to restore him to his parent if satisfied that this is in the child's interests. The only factor is the well being of the child. This principle is followed in choosing suitable employment after school age. We keep in touch, mind their savings for them and try to give them the kind of help and backing the average boy receives from the average parent.....”

The Move Away From Institutional Care

In 1957, Board Chairman Canon Blackwood Moore, mindful of the move away from institutional care internationally, drove future policy here.

Instead of a large institution, children would be cared for in “cottage homes” - a mix of seven boys and girls living in an ordinary suburban house, cared for by a married couple and attending the local school.

Canon Blackwood Moore emphasised that the success of the system depended greatly on the choice of house-parents. It was also proving difficult to maintain large numbers of children in one institution and to get getting appropriately trained staff.

In 1958 Blackwood House in Herne Bay became the first “Cottage Home” The old Papatoetoe Orphans Home was sold and the surrounding farmland subdivided.

In 1959, Stoddart House, gifted along with 60 acres, became the second Family Home. As more funds became available, additional homes were established all over Auckland: Thomas Granger House, Margaret Granger House, Lloyd House, Radley House, Kenderdine House, all under the name of the Orphan Home Trust Board.

Securing our Future

The social work tapestry was in need of tidying up, fraying edges secured and neatened.

Successive board chairmen Mr Malcolm Cort-Astly, SM and Mr. Charles Jenkins headed the Board in the 1950s.

They were instrumental in the drafting of a Private Act of Parliament which led to the Orphan Home Trust becoming The Church of England Children's Trust in 1962.

This Act was amended in 1968 to include the former Children's Home Trust Board and the Henry Brett Memorial Home Trust Board in what became The Anglican Children's Trust.

In 1975 the Act was further amended to include the St Mary's Home Trust, and our current name was created - The Anglican Trust for Women and Children.

Meeting Changing Needs

By the early 1980s, social work focus internationally and in New Zealand was moving away from residential care of children separated from their families and whanau, to a preventative intervention, supporting families with young children.

Under Miss Keitha Weir's chairmanship, we revamped the old St Mary's into the St Mary's Family Centre. On site we established the St Mary's Preschool, as well as the Granger Grove residential parenting programme in 1993 for mothers and their babies.

Most of the old "cottage" family homes were sold and Maori and Pacific Island Social work units were established.

*Dianne Kenderdine
Chairman ATWC.
January 2011*