Greetings Everyone.

Do you recall, as a child, contemplating the possibility of being alive in the year 2000? It was so far distant. It even sounded odd. And here we are - 2013 and the first month already gone.

But what a close to the year 2012! The Christmas function was such a time of joy and renewal for all who attended. The buzz in the room as people greeted each other, some not having met for many, many years, was electric. There is always a demand of courage for people to attend such functions for the first time. Will there be anyone I know? Will anyone remember me? We’ve all been through this. The Christmas spirit was well and truly present as everyone mingled well and simply enjoyed the genuine sense of camaraderie which pervaded the afternoon. It was a joy to see so many newcomers.

The singing of Christmas carols, with accompaniment by Norma Hale, Delys Pride and Doug Bolton, reached musical expertise which must have brought back memories of long ago choir practice.

Norma entertained once again with her beautiful skills on the violin. A surprise was the generous presentation by Dee Burge’s husband, Murray, on the piano. Norma and Murray and Doug entertained members for a greater part of the afternoon. Their trip down a musical memory lane encouraged more community singing. Altogether a memorable time. Thank you to everyone present. It was a pleasure to see so many men-folk attending, including George Tacey, an ex-student who has been a member for many years. A special feature of the day was the large display of photos and memorabilia of the school and ex-students. A special thank you to Bernice Reid who spent many hours organising this presentation, which required a great deal of attention to detail. A fantastic job, well done! Sr Joan Smith informed members of the history and progress of the re-establishment of St Joseph’s building. Her report is a special feature in this newsletter.

Easter will soon be upon us. Let the essence of this period, the suffering (currently so prevalent around the world) which led to the joy of the resurrection, be in our thoughts as we pray for peace and maybe a little spark of joy for everyone.

Baha’i Prayer for Peace
Be generous in prosperity, and thankful in adversity. Be fair in thy judgement and guarded in thy speech. Be a lamp unto those who walk in darkness, and a home to the stranger. Be eyes to the blind and a guiding light unto the feet of the erring. Be a breath of life to the body of humankind, a dew to the soil of the human heart, and a fruit upon the tree of humility.

Chairperson’s Report
Four newsletters have been distributed in the last 12 months. Our mailing list has 241 members, covering every State in Australia, plus America, New Zealand and England and Ireland. (This number has increased since the Xmas function). The Editor thanks everyone who helped with information for the biographies. The response from readers shows that the effort is worthwhile. Our current bank reconciliation shows a credit balance of $1138.52.

The response to an article in The West Australian requesting memorabilia regarding St Joseph’s was overwhelming. Sr Joan Smith was responsible for making the material available for display at the Xmas function.

Sr Joan has requested assistance for Heritage Week. The Government has put the convent on the heritage list and it is included in tours organised for this week. If you can help phone Sr Joan: 9325 4155 Or email: joan.smith@mercy.org.au

The Chairperson thanked the Committee members who have worked tirelessly and enthusiastically at all events, donating their time and skills, which is why our success is continuing.

The Committee has established a link with Mercedes College, their ex-students group and Our Lady’s College ex-students. The Principal of the school, Sheena Barber, has put forward the proposal that a Victoria Square Alumni be formed incorporating the three schools. This is a worthwhile concept and will establish St Joseph’s in its rightful place, as the first secondary education establishment in Western Australia. There will be a few functions leading up to this and all our members are invited to take part, and maybe assist at some of these events, by way of manning stalls which display our history, etc. (A separate page gives details of the dates involved and also our diary for the forthcoming year.) If you can, please take the time to assist in these areas.

A big thank-you to all members for your continuing support and encouragement to the committee. We work for your benefit. Let us know what we can do for you.

Members should feel a degree of satisfaction that the contribution made by so many to re-establish the history of St Joseph’s has paid off. We are still seeking more memorabilia, uniforms, hats etc. Please read the attached Fridge notice which gives you more detail of activities related to St Joseph’s school.

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COMMITTEE
Helen Rogan. 26 Hanworth St. Balcatta WA 6021.
Tel: 9344 1757. rogans1@westnet.com.au
Janice Hunt 0400 997 188 jlhunt@amnet.net.au
Kath Busher 93496208 bushers@westnet.com.au
Marg Dall 92763393 mdall@bigpond.net.au
Helen Bass 93493344 basshe41@hotmail.com
Ann Pickett 93676202 Pat Hemmy 93494174
“We stood in the wilds of Australia in the mid-summer night and we could truly say of it that we had nowhere to lay our heads.” These are the words of Sr Ursula Frayne, the leader of a group of seven Sisters of Mercy, upon their arrival in Perth, 9th January 1846. They discovered no arrangements had been made for their accommodation. Consider the climatic conditions at that time of the year and where the sisters had come from: Ireland, at the beginning of a very cold winter. Undaunted, these women undertook their missionary work with courage and initiative. By February 2nd they had organised desks from packing cases, planks and bricks as seats, and opened the first secondary school for girls in Australia. This site is where Mercedes College stands today. The population of WA at that time was 6,000. Only half the children in the colony received education.

Over the next seven years four schools were designed, each with their own special attributes: St Joseph’s - Assisted free school for older children; Holy Angels - for very small children; St Mary’s - for Aboriginal children; Our Lady of Mercy School - a pension school.

A new building was erected in 1853, gothic in style, with two storeys each with four rooms measuring 18.2 m x 9.14 m x 6.71m. The sisters were excited to move into their new home, only to find that the builders, using ladders to move to the second storey, had forgotten to put in the stairs! Two chapels were used as classes to prepare children for the sacraments. This was one of the buildings erected by ticket-of-leave men, led by a man named ‘Wilson’.

The ticket-of-leave process was part of the Western Australian Convict System. It was defined by the amount of good conduct ‘marks’ earned by a convict. Their activities were severely restricted but employment was available to these men without continual supervision and they were able to keep a passport.

The building cost £823, furnishings were an added £100. The Sisters raised the funds by holding a variety of bazaars, or fetes. The invaluable information gleaned during this process of refurbishment. A palm tree was moved and a room was discovered beneath it. Another room was found under different part of the building. Artifacts discovered in these areas have added to the story of this courageous, inspiring and amazing journey of education in Western Australia, started by the Sisters of Mercy.


MISSING STUDENTS!
Do you have any names you would like to add? Or do you know where to find them? Allen Shelley (Alcock). Bazzo, Ann.
Barrett Helen (Adamac). Bradshaw
Janet (Hayes). Byrne, Colleen.
Buchanan Judy. Cernic, Jan.
Charnley Janet.
Campbell (O'Neill) Sharon.
Catalano, (Tomoe) Antonina.
Charnley, Janet. Clarke Jenny
(Godfrey). Dehler, Ann.
Dudek, Donna. Dwyer, Susan.
Fletcher (Budden) Joan. Frankovitch.
Anita. Godfrey Jennifer. Gugich
(Foster) Vie. Guild, Gertrude.
Harapeet, Pam. Harry, Veronica
(Curtis). Hawthorn, Jill.
Jones, Glenice. King, Mary.
Kingsbury, Shirley Kingsbury, Susan
Kynwood, Glenys. Langdon, Daphne
Lowry, Jennifer.
Marchesi Rose (Mattaboni).
Meslovich, Anna (Coniglio)
McDonnell, Marie. Maiolo, Catherine.
Moore(Kingsbury) Maureen
Murphy, Josephine. Nasso, Wendy.
Nasso Pamela. Norton, Wendy
(Osborne). O'Brien, Moira.
O'Connor, Frances. O'Keeffe,
Dorothy. O'Leary, Theresa.
Pomponio, Rosa. Potter, Lorraine.
Ramsay, Maureen. Salt, Bernadette
Sands, Ann. Sands, Margaret.
Stanley, (Gibson) June. Sims, Pat.
Stephens, Jeanette. Stephen Narelle
Symmons Maureen.
Tamlin, Catherine (Walsh).
Towers, Val. Turfrey (Clare).
Turvey, Edna. Walsh Leonie.
White, Margaret. Willey (Ramsay)