

Good Samaritan

Oblates



Our Story so far...
and where to from here



Background

It was back in 1987 at the 21st General Chapter of the Good Samaritan Sisters, that Sisters expressed the desire for exploring new ways of belonging. During the 1990's new opportunities opened up and Associates were invited to share in both community and ministry. However, just being associated with the Sisters was not enough for some. Calls for deeper and more formal relationship with the Sisters came from various parts of the country.

These calls were listened to and so in 2001 the Good Samaritan Oblate movement began with a group at St Scholastica's Glebe Point. This had the approval of the Superior (Sr Sonia Wagner) and her Council and the first Oblation as a Good Samaritan Oblate took place on 14th July 2002 at St Scholastica's Glebe. Gradually Oblate Groups formed in other parts of NSW, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia.

With numbers growing, it was decided that we needed some structure and so Sr Veronica Griffith was named Director of Oblates in 2003. Then gatherings of Oblates and Partners in Ministry were held in 2010, 2013 and 2016. As a follow up from the gathering in 2013, the Oblate News was published in 2014. This initiative has continued to keep Oblates across the country informed about events, resources and other relevant issues.

First Good Samaritan Oblates



Margaret Gianni



Guido Gianni



Elizabeth Marshall



Trish Panton



Oblates Western Australia



Second Partnership Gathering, Glebe 2013


It was December 2014 that an Oblate Reference Group was set up. This consisted of both Sisters and Oblates as a first step towards Oblate leadership. Numbers of Oblates continued to grow. In September 2016 a working paper was presented to the Council of the Superior by Sr Bernardina Sontrop (Chair of the Oblate Reference Group) noting that the time had come to formalise the relationship between the Congregation

and the Oblates into the future, clarify roles and relationships and to develop appropriate governance structures that honour both the Congregation and the Oblates.

This paper identified that our Good Samaritan model for Oblates most closely aligned with what is called an Embedded model¹ Unfortunately, with the change over of Leadership in the Congregation, this paper was not taken forward. There was a presumption that Oblates at the local level were more involved in and informed of its content. This, however, was not the case and therefore important steps were missed. Yet other positive progress certainly occurred. The Oblate Intranet was set up; *The Good Samaritan Candidacy Program – Reflection Starters* was created and candidates have reported how helpful this has been for their journey. Some Oblates were invited to be part of the last Chapter Gathering. Unfortunately there was no forum for formal feedback from those Oblates to Oblates in general.

Further steps since the change in Congregational Leadership have been taken as the Good Samaritan Oblate movement grows and develops. The future of the Oblate Movement became part of the ongoing Strategic Plan of the Congregation² Sr Veronica McCluskie took over from Sr Bernardina Sontrop as the Member of Council with responsibility for Oblates and the Oblate Committee was set up with a specific Mandate³.

With the resignation of Sr Veronica Griffith as Oblate Director in 2018, applications for a Lay Oblate Director were sought. No appointment eventuated and it became clear that more groundwork



**Oblates of the
Sisters of the Good Samaritan
of the Order of St Benedict**

In the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ

I.....
dedicate myself
before God and the communion of Saints
as an Oblate of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan
of the Order of St Benedict.

I promise to live in the spirit of
the Rule of St Benedict
by the values of obedience, stability
and ongoing conversion of life
and ongoing conversion of life
appropriate to my vocation in life.

I dedicate myself
to prayer and good works
inspired by the Good Samaritan.

.....
candidate

.....
superior or counsellor

**Community
date**



Tracey Langford signing

and preparation was required. Sr Sonia Wagner was subsequently appointed with the title of Good Samaritan Oblate Coordinator.

At an Oblate gathering - *Pilgrims, Pathways and Possibilities* - held at Lourdes Hill College, Brisbane, with Oblates attending from across the country, Sr Patty Fawcner addressed the group giving her hopes for the future. She set forth her dream for the Oblate Movement.

My hope would be that we deliberately co-create our future; that we discern together God's preferences for the Good Samaritan Oblate Movement; that we deliberately ask how we want to belong to each other in new ways in these new times. My hope is that the Oblate movement becomes more self-directing, evolving to greater autonomy and interdependence. This is a desire that will eventually become a necessity.

Taking on board the challenge of Sr Patty's hopes, and in the light of the paper given by Sr Bernardina, the Oblate Committee reworked the GS Oblate Handbook which clarifies roles at all levels of the Oblate movement (GSOC, State/Regional Coordinators and Local Coordinators). Local oblate groups were asked, by the Committee, for feedback about a donation toward the administrative cost of the Oblates. Informative feedback was received from a number of groups. As yet no further communication re Finances has been sent to Oblates.

Where are we Now

In 2019, Sr Patty Fawkner invited Sr Sonia Wagner and Oblate Marie Milne to attend the Benedictine *Oblates for the Future* Symposium in Cottonwood USA. On their return and after discussion with the Oblate Committee, Marie and Sonia sent a report to Patty and Council recommending *That a Plenary Council in 2020 be dedicated to discernment about a new Oblate Vision and governance model; that Oblates be invited to attend the International Benedictine Oblate Congress to be held in Rome from 6 – 12 November 2021 and that a gathering of SGS Oblates be held in 2022.* (The full report is on the Intranet.)

The Plenary Council was given the go ahead so the Oblate Committee started planning a process for the July Plenary Council to discern the way forward. A sub-committee to plan the Plenary Council was set up consisting of Sr Sonia Wagner, Marie Milne, Penny Carroll and Sr Veronica McCluskie.

Unfortunately due to COVID-19 the July Plenary Council had to be cancelled. However, we do not want to stop our discernment of the best governance structures that will be needed as the Good Samaritan Oblates move into the future. In the meantime, the Oblate Committee commits to an ongoing conversation with all Oblates, in order to listen to opinions and to take time to consider thoughtfully, all that is heard and learnt.



Oblates Philippines

Endnotes

- 1 Associates of Religious Institutes: A way forward, Amy Hereford. RCRI Bulletin No 7 Spring 2012. An embedded model of lay association with a Religious Institute best describes the relationship of the GS Oblate movement to the GS Congregation. The relationship is one of interdependence.

The GS Oblate Handbook defines the following elements which are identified in the Embedded Model

- a. The requirements for Oblate membership
- b. A program and process for those who wish to be Oblates
- c. The relationship between the Congregation and Oblates
- d. Oblate participation in the life of the Congregation
- e. Rights and responsibilities of Oblates

The following were also identified as belonging to the Embedded Model but are not found in the GS Oblate Handbook

- f. formal organisation (policies and governance)
- g. financial arrangements
- h. insurance and liability

- 2 This Strategic Plan commits the congregation to embark on a process of formation and dialogue to establish a future vision and governance model for Good Samaritan Oblates.

- 3 Good Samaritan Oblate Committee Mandate

Tasks

- a. Encourage the vision and mission of Good Samaritan Oblates
- b. Facilitate the emerging governance of the Good Samaritan Oblate movement
- c. Coordinate the development and delivery of programs and processes and the sharing of resources
- d. Ensure professional standards and the SGS Code of Practice are embedded in all processes and practices
- e. Provide content for Oblate Intranet
- f. Foster communication that promotes mutuality
- g. Review Oblate policies in the light of the Statement of Directions



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