



Episode 1 – 10 Years along the way of life and faith

GABRIELLE: Welcome to 'Communio Calling'. My name is Gabrielle Sinclair, your host. Thank you for joining us as Good Samaritan Education launches our very first podcast series. This launch coincides with the 10th anniversary of our establishment by the Sisters of the Good Samaritan. Good Samaritan Education was established to carry forth the mission of Catholic education in the Good Samaritan Benedictine tradition.

I have the great pleasure of sharing with you an interview with two vital voices in the story of Good Samaritan Education. Terry Creagh, Good Samaritan Education's inaugural Governing Council Chair and Kay Herse, our first Executive Director.

This rich conversation is full of challenge and treasure for us, as these two wise and spirit-filled women share the journey of discernment that resulted in the establishment of Good Samaritan Education. As you will hear, Terry and Kay's passion for the Good Samaritan Benedictine tradition, and their deep faith, are inescapable. Join me as they walk us through their experience and insights into the legacy and treasure entrusted to Good Samaritan Education.



It's so wonderful to have you both here, Terry and Kay, for our very first 'Communio Calling'.

TERRY & KAY: Thanks.

GABRIELLE: So I guess one of the things that we are celebrating in this podcast series is stories that bring us together and what makes us community. So let's tell some stories first. So, Kay, first of all, what brought you here in this journey to be part of this Good Samaritan Education community?

KAY: My initial contact with the Good Samaritan Sisters was in 1991, when I applied for the position as principal at Lourdes Hill College in Brisbane. The only Good Samaritan High School, only Good Samaritan school at that time in Brisbane. I had not had contact with the Good Sams. I was educated with the Mercies and I had worked in Catholic education with other congregations. So it was a new experience and in reading the materials that the college had put together, that the Sisters had prepared, for... in preparation for applying for that position, the Benedictine spirit, the values, the charism, the approach, really resonated with me and I thought I could... I could warm to this, I could be part of this and I was fortunate enough to be appointed to the position. And then met a number of sisters, and others, teachers, people who had been involved with the school for a long time, parents, and the regard with which the Sisters... in which the Sisters were held was obvious.

Really, it was through that process then of familiarising myself with the school but also with the other nine schools that are throughout Australia, and participating in formation, etc., that I really, I guess, committed to that charism, that spirit, that way of being in the world, that face of the church and it's been a wonderful journey for me.

I suppose one thing that struck me particularly in coming in contact with the Good Sams, was that there was an Australianness about their charism and approach. That was... that differed to me from, if you like, the Irishness of some of the other congregations.

I found the Good Sams to be very practical in the best sense of that word, that to be able to hold the kernel of the story of their commitment to church, to the Benedictine charism, spirituality, but to seem very free to change the frills around the edges, change with the circumstances, while still holding very firmly what that core belief and way of life was.

I suppose my first impression that being the first Australian congregation, or congregation founded in Australia, there seemed to be deep roots into that kind of cultural milieu, I suppose. And that... I liked that. That fitted well with me.

GABRIELLE: Yeah, that's wonderful. Thank you.

Well Terry, you can tell us a bit about your story. What led you to the door and what were the kind of milestones that led you to the door of Good Samaritan Education?

TERRY: My real connection with Good Samaritan Education was through Catholic education. I was involved in Catholic education in leadership roles where I met people like Sr Mary McDonald. I also taught at Mount Maria with Catherine Slattery.

Apart from that, I knew very little about Good Samaritan Sisters, ethos, story, until I was invited to join the Good Samaritan Education Council. And it was at the very first meeting that I went to in Sydney, feeling very inadequate moving into an environment that I knew very little about, but knowing that I was bringing a lot of education expertise and leadership and administrative abilities, but nothing of the story of Benedict or really the Good Sams.

I did do quite a bit of reading before that first meeting, but I still went with a sense of, "I wonder whether this is the right thing for me or not." But I walked away from that meeting and to me it was a pivotal moment for me. I'm quite sure the people around the table didn't know that and maybe wouldn't have been aware of the situation that I was in. But I remember at one stage during the meeting that the discussion became a little... there was a pause in the discussion in the sense that, what was in the charter for the council did not allow us to pursue whatever the point was that we were looking at. And the chair at the time said, "Well, maybe it is that we need to look at the charter as times move on." I found that a most amazing attitude, in a sense. I'd been involved in lots of very important meetings and there was never that sort of view of dealing with what were the parameters, as it were.

GABRIELLE: Was that pause to really... are we addressing the need? Yeah, it's very important.

TERRY: It was, it was a very important moment for me. And I came away from that meeting saying to myself, "I would love to continue working with this group." Not knowing in any way how I would become involved. From my perspective, I'd been invited to be on an advisory group. And so that was my first real experience of Good Samaritan Education, of Good Samaritan and of the people who were part of that group.

There were a few sisters in that group and there were about three or four lay people on the council at the time.

GABRIELLE: So Kay, the next question is for you. We're celebrating the 10th anniversary of Good Samaritan Education, and the beginning was this new life and becoming an ecclesial community, often referred to as a public juridic person, how would you explain that to someone that had no idea what that meant?

KAY: A public juridic person is an entity within... recognised within canon law, that is able to conduct works in the name of the church. So the closest analogy, say in civil law, is to a corporation. In civil law, a corporation is an entity that can do things and be sued and all sorts of things, spend money and buy property and so on.

Within canon law, the public juridic person is an entity. It's an aggregate of persons, or an aggregate of things, that has been recognised, constituted, by an authority within the church, that has the capacity to do such things as a church entity.

There are a number of public juridic persons and they are not new. So a diocese is a public juridic person. The congregations are public... a congregation, a religious institute, is a public juridic person.

The newness with these new entities, public juridic persons, that are being established and have been since about the 2000s or a bit earlier in Australia, are that they consist mainly of lay people and they have been constituted for the particular purpose of running church ministries. So they're referred to now sometimes as ministerial PJPs to make that distinction. But the entity itself is just a structure within canon law that is able to do work in the name of the church and be recognised by the church as such.

GABRIELLE: That's the most thorough description I've ever heard. That was brilliant.

And how do other church entities... are they still grappling with what that means in the sense of how they fit in?

KAY: When we moved into that area, which we as GSE... Good Samaritan Education Council, say in 2008, there were very few. There were a couple of health PJPs that had been established to take care of health - Catholic Healthcare, there was John of Gods in Western Australia - and within the canon law the public juridic person can be established either by the apostolic see, by Rome, or can be constituted by them or they can be constituted by a bishop or a group of bishops. The Catholic Healthcare ones had been constituted by a bishop or group of bishops.

In 2008, when organisations such as Edmund Rice Education, the Christian Brothers, began looking at what was the future, the preferred future, for their schools, the Good Samaritans and so on, they were organised congregations that were in education. Education, I think, was a much more challenging area for the bishops to say, "Yes, another... this entity can, made up of lay people, can conduct that." I think health... health provides a service and charity to the faithful, to the public, to the community. Education is core to the passing on of the faith to... the continuation of... of inducting young people, I guess, into the church. So that, I think for the bishops, was a very different decision to be made.

GABRIELLE: Because essentially all Catholic education where either under a religious order or a diocese, so a bishop was the, or had some, oversight.

KAY: That's correct.

The concept that someone who is the leader of a religious congregation has devoted their life to the church, they are in the church, deep and rooted. With a lay group of people, that is not so obvious. They are not so tied into the structural nature of the church.

And we did have people, not a bishop, but someone who works in... had experience in this sort of area, who expressed the view that, you know, it's alright for the first generation of people who will join. But then, you know, what about the next generation after that? How connected are they going to be to church or the one after that? Whereas if they've joined a religious congregation, then they are there for the long haul.

GABRIELLE: It's always that conversation with handing on any kind of tradition. And when you look at migrants and first generation, second generation, and it's the changes and so I guess it's a valid concern to make sure that we're holding those things to what the purpose was.

KAY: There was certainly conversation as we went through the process that we should have a bishop on the... appointed to the assembly. That was resisted because the concept that the Good Sams had - and Sr Clare Condon was instrumental in this, in all of this - I think Clare had a very clear view that if it was going to be a genuine participation and partnership and passing on with lay people, then it was incongruous to put a bishop... Because what if there was some difficulty then... how is the bishop, there's conflict of interest, you know, all of those sorts of things. So, and also because of the strong Benedictine background, Clare was also able to point to that, you know, that the Benedictine story's been around since the 6th century and that's managed to be sustained and passed on and so on and so on.

So, I mean, I think the bishops were in a difficult place. I don't think they wanted to stymie any kind of growth and whatever, but they have responsibilities too. And to, as far as they could, to see that what was put in place was going to be something that was sustainable and linked very firmly and part of the church in a very fundamental way.

In our experience of GSE, once the decision was taken to move toward... for the Good Sams, for Clare, to establish a PJP that was diocesan-based, constituted by a bishop, the bishop... Archbishop of Sydney, in consultation or collaboration with the other four, I think there was a very positive reaction to that because all of the education ones before us - there were only three I think - they had all gone to the apostolic see and been constituted by Rome. And so I think for the Australian bishops, that sense of it being rooted in Australia was significant. And that fitted absolutely with the story of the Good Sams being and as the first Australian congregation and also their commitment to local church.

TERRY: They were commenced in Sydney and the Archbishop of Sydney was... is the signatory.

GABRIELLE: Yes, co-founder and then signatory of Good Samaritan Education too.

Well Terry, you have been, then, having joined the Good Samaritan council... that education council would have been, kind of, in the very first conversations of what that might look... what a sustainable future might look like. Can you remember what, kind of, the first stirrings were in... and dreams or aspirations that, kind of, the kernel of that was at that time?

TERRY: Do you really mean there the answer to Clare's question, "Where to from here?"

GABRIELLE: I guess so, yes.

TERRY: And I think, when you look at the history of the Good Sams in Australia, in lots of ways that question has been asked along the decades. It's not a new way of looking, but it certainly is part of, I think,

the brave and the bold way in which various congregational leaders, Mary Ronayne was one of the early ones that we know, and worked with a brilliant woman, a woman whose total focus and dedication was to look at where education - Good Samaritan schools - where is the best way to take forward the, you know, that progress or response to... and we talk about it all the time, the signs of the times.

And there is the famous paper presentation that Mary Ronayne gave at the first conference that was held in Sydney, on looking at the organisation for Australian Catholic Education, Catholic schools. That Mary really, in line with Vatican II, put to the gathering that the whole of church is responsible for Catholic education and not just religious sisters or brothers, which generally was the case.

And so from those very early days, and Mary working away with Good Samaritan schools, began that process for looking to establishing incorporated boards in each of the schools. And over a period of '81 to '93, 1981-93, the ten colleges step-by-step took on the role, the governance role of... with a board of directors.

And what was, I think, really fascinating as a person coming into an organisation that already had made those steps, was to see how there was never one blanket statement that was made that covered all the schools. Each of those schools, and as you can see that's a fairly long period - '81 to '93 - a fairly long period to take each of those schools step-by-step to become incorporated.

And so, it clearly meant that those who were working in the development of this looked at each local situation, looked at where and how the school was ready for such a thing, where the personnel were for, you know, this election of directors etc. And so that step had already taken place.

GABRIELLE: It was never one-size-fits-all ever attitude.

TERRY: No. And that, when I became connected with Good Samaritan Education Council, that was clear to me, to all of the school... You walk into each of the ten schools and they're very clearly schools with the tradition of Benedictine spirituality and with the ethos of such. They're very clearly schools where the story of the Good Samaritan Sisters and their work and their presence is there. And yet, each one of them is very different.

And they've remained that way, and that's, I think, one of the real treasures that we have is that diversity yet unity. And it's... we've said it, sort of, all along, it was our strength, but it's also one of the difficult things to hold in balance.

So, as we went through the years with Sr Clare, the question of, "Where to from here?" was one that was given to the education council to pursue, to look at, "Where do we go with regard to governance and... or future governance?"

And we know at that time boards were working well. We had strong leadership in each of the schools. And so it becomes that question of, "Why don't we just stay with what is going well?" But there are other influences around that wouldn't allow either the organisation, congregation or Sr Clare, to sit still and say, "Well, we'll just enjoy what we've got here."

So the council, and Kay was the executive director of... No, it was the executive officer of the education council. and we held workshops after workshops looking at all the issues, the questions. But we had as a great basis for that the book that Mary McDonald put together, 'New Times, New Challenges'. And that was pre-reading for anyone who came to the workshops. And they were wonderful experiences.

GABRIELLE: It must have been a really dynamic and exciting time. Because, like you said, that the parameters were always being challenged about what question are we answering, like what is the... what is the future? So just to have that permission to - play is the wrong word - but just to really shape something in such a dynamic way must've been really...

TERRY: And one of the things that I really appreciated too, was that this... if there was to be change, there was no, "There will be change." If there was to be change, then everyone who would be affected by that in the sense of all of the sisters, governing council, people, the company members, the board directors, and the leadership of the colleges, were all involved.

And there were sisters who were in Central Australia. There were sisters who were in Western Australia, in North Queensland, in South Australia. And while we didn't have full workshops with them, somebody went to each of those groups and had a workshop with them. There was no one who was left out of the input in... that then led to the final decision.

And from my perspective, that was a real example, to me, of that discernment that takes place, and takes place so frequently. You see it in a lot of the decision making with the Good Sams. That discernment process was one which when the final information was presented, people felt that their voice have been heard.

GABRIELLE: It certainly speaks to that, from the rule of how to seek wise counsel, even that the youngest are to be sort.

Kay, it very much speaks to the values that were being used to... along this process. What would you say are the desires and values that really was driving this process of change or possible change? And then, I guess, what were the obstacles too?

KAY: We identified out of all the range of Benedictine values, that for the process of the consultation and discernment, that three were most important. Attentiveness, so listening. Community, as Terry said, everyone was involved. Stewardship was the third one. That we have a responsibility. Those of us who are currently here are just holding these things, they're not ours and we're passing them on and what is a responsible way in which we can do that to the best advantage? So that was the premise to begin with of, I suppose, the stance that we wanted to have throughout the process.

Just going back a little bit with regard to what Terry's described there, I think part of the foundation that helped to make this successful, was that between 1993 and 2008, there had been a lot of developments, incremental changes, again done in a very collaborative way.

For example, there was a standardised constitution. All the colleges adopted it. It was done - I was principal at the time - and you'd get from Mary Ronayne, "This is the next draft." And we'd all [indistinct]. It was a very consultative process and at the end of it everyone went, "Yes, that's good." And then a lease, to standardise the property arrangement, which came in in 2003, again - same way. No time was too long for everybody to have worked through it and got advice about it and to have ticked off on it.

So there were those foundational things that all the schools were operating from that. [indistinct] On a very practical level, we'd had a whole process where we put to the schools that it would be advantageous to have some agreed accounting principles about how, you know, depreciation of buildings, all of that accounting sort of material. And so we worked through a long process. We brought the business managers together, the finance people from the boards. We had someone from one of the big accounting firms who was excellent

and committed to our project. And we worked through an agreed set of principles. Wasn't forced on anyone. Everyone just said, "Yeah, this is a good idea, we will do that."

So, those sorts of things are in place in a very practical sense, but the other side of that, or in conjunction with that, we had also built up a lot of formation programs. So all of the board chairs, for example, we had formation program with them run by the Institute of Management. We would bring the principles together regularly, obviously. The deputies would come together, the... you know, all the levels.

So these people knew each other at some level and we had a conference every three years where we would bring all the boards together with the company members and the leadership of the colleges. So there was that sense that we are a Good Samaritan community. We're not just Lourdes Hill up here in Brisbane on our own and we don't know what they're doing down there. We were part of a community.

So when this process that Terry just described so well, was launched, it wasn't coming out of nowhere. It was part of that ongoing process that Terry mentioned before, of the Good Sams constantly looking at the signs of the times and how can we, you know, adjust as we go along.

And then, of course, we came to this pivotal moment of do we have to do something even more significant about the canonical responsibility for the colleges.

We discerned a group of about five, I think, signs of the times that we needed to give thought and consideration to. One was the voice of women within the church and acknowledging that the female congregation, or female congregations and their leaders over aeons, have been where the voice has come from. So that came through really strongly in the workshops, that they did not want that to be lost.

The increasing appreciation of diversity within the community and that the schools, as Terry said, are diverse, but they have that call at their heart of the Benedictine Good Sam story.

The fact that the church is actually a group of communities, a communion of communities, and so that... also within our structures, it's a community of communities. Certainly the Benedictine, the absolute importance and foundational 'everything' of the Benedictine Catholic foundation of the whole structure...

TERRY: And that Benedictine contribution to church and education.

KAY: Yes, yes, that's right. And then... The fact that governments were more and more wanting to engage with peak bodies when they deal with things, the complexity of the modern world, really, were all... were the signs of the times that we felt had to be responded to and dealt with. And whether that was, "Well, we're going very well, thank you very much. We'll just keep doing this." Or other options. And we looked at what the possible options were, set those out for people too so they kind of knew what the options were and then worked through that process of the workshops.

TERRY: With lots of interviews in between with other authorities.

KAY: Yes.

TERRY: Religious groups in different, you know, passage of time with directors of education, with bishops etc.

GABRIELLE: What were the obstacles or major challenges in this process, do you think?

KAY: I think sustainability, financial sustainability, is a major one. I think another obstacle was the fear of losing the ethos, the Benedictine ethos, spirituality, Good Samaritan Benedictine educational aspect of the school...

GABRIELLE: The thing that makes you who you are, yes.

TERRY: Yeah. That was a fear. That something that was treasured, we don't want to lose that.

KAY: I think a difficulty... obstacle, I suppose, certainly a difficulty, was that the PJPs that were existing prior to GSE were predominantly health related. So there wasn't really, apart from the EREA, we were the first one that was just education. And the challenge that we were only ten schools. The Christian Brothers, EREA, much bigger in terms of numbers of schools.

There were other groups that were looking at it the same time, the Dominicans, etc., but they had not, they had not progressed any further. So it was, I guess the challenge of being at the cutting edge, so to speak. So being the first group...

TERRY: Unknown, unknown territory.

KAY: The unknown territory and also the others were pontifical right. And so again it was setting... doing it within the local church.

So they were challenges, obstacles. I don't know that we... did we think in terms of obstacles? I think we thought in terms of challenges.

GABRIELLE: Yeah.

KAY: I mean, one challenge, or major consideration, and I guess a challenge, was the questions around property and the financial requirements of the congregation going forward entangled with ownership of property and things of that nature. So they were certainly heavy consideration and complications. But I don't think there was anything that we regarded as an obstacle, in the sense that it couldn't be overcome.

GABRIELLE: What were some of the milestones that... or points along the way that really, kind of, firmed up how the structure ended up?

KAY: Well, the education Council produced a report for Clare and her counsel in 2010 after two years of workshops etc. Also, we conducted interviews with Directors of Catholic Education in all of... in the five diocese. Clare spoke with the bishops in four of them. Mary McDonald spoke with the Archbishop of Brisbane.

And then the report was put together. The council went through all this information and we had criteria that we were judging things by. Each of the five... five criteria I think it was, started with sustainably. So to sustainably be able to maintain the charism and so forth into the future. To sustainably be able to, you know, deal with the financial matters too, etc. So there were, I think, about five of those.

In our thinking, sustainability was about whatever we decide now cannot fall over in two years. It has to be able to be moved forward and have a future, adjusted and whatnot, as required by the signs of the times, but it's not a short-term fix. It had to be... had to have long-term survival prospects.

So we saw the PJP establishment as the one that would meet all of our criteria, but it had challenges around the financials in schools. And one of our criteria was that it should... there should not be enormous disruption to the schools. It should be, as far as was possible, almost indiscernible that this change at this very high level of canonical responsibility takes place.

So we then handed that over to Clare and her counsel and they discerned within themselves, and Clare made the decision with the advice of her counsel then to move forward with the PJP, the diocesan constitution by the Archbishop of Sydney, because it resonated with the Good Sams history and their commitment to local church, but in communion with the other four bishops. So again, it was a very collaborative, consultative, sort of process.

And when Clare announced that decision, we were having one of the three yearly conferences and all the groups... various groups were there. And Clare stood up and said, "This is what we're doing, this is the way it's going," and everybody raised to their feet and applauded. It was a really magic moment.

GABRIELLE: Yeah. Well, I mean knowing and when hearing the process and the care taken to be so connected to the reality and the history of who... Good Samaritan Education, or who the Good Sams were as an entity and as individual, as community, to be so embedded in who they are, to come to that decision, it must be magic to... and know it's right.

KAY: I remember my feeling when that happened. It was like this wave of goodwill that came from the group. Which was really important because without that, sort of, buy-in....

GABRIELLE: They had to be onboard.

KAY: Exactly. That's right. It couldn't have worked. And in the first stages people were so wanting it to work and so wanting to cooperate with its success.

GABRIELLE: The willingness of the Good Sams to entrust, like it was an enormous [indistinct] level of trust to hand this on too.

TERRY: The launch day in 2011, July 2011, was an amazing day for those of us who had been asked to take on the role of assembly members or governing council members.

And the thing that I still see and feel is when the launch finished and we were walking out onto the lawn in St Scholastica's, in front of the convent there, for drinks on the lawn and the opportunity to be able to chat with each other and come to the realisation that for those of us who were members and governing council, that that's who we were.

GABRIELLE: What you signed up for..

TERRY: But what struck me was as you walked out, the number of sisters who said, "Oh, thank you for taking... Thank you for..." Not one, not one in any way, seemed to be, "Oh, dear me. We have lost, you know, our authority within this area or we're afraid of what will happen when we hand this over." The words were ones of gratitude. It was so humbling. It was so humbling.

KAY: Because, and we'd read all of this, that, you know, the grief, there will be grief, there will be, you know, it's loss for the sisters, for members of our congregation when the ministry is handed over. Then there's a questioning of, you know, purpose and so forth.

And whether because the spirit within the congregation is one of reading the signs of the times and being prepared and able to let go and take forward to the new time, or whether because the process was really good and everybody got their opportunity to ask the questions and have their answers given and so forth. But there was... Terry's right, there was absolutely none of that. There was a joy within the sisters and there was a joy within the colleges.

TERRY: And it was thorough work that went into those final steps. And then when you think about all the canonical work that was done through the canon lawyer, setting up of the statutes, developing those statutes and all the, you know, background work, that was so thorough. It was a wonderful example of really excellent planning for the future.

KAY: The other very positive thing for GSE was the calibre of the people who were attracted to be part of the new structure. The members of the assembly, the breadth of experience, the faith, the commitment that they all brought to the task. And those of them who were on the governing council, you know, the amount of work that required to be done after the launch, it was just really humbling. I was Executive Director, so saw all of this, you know, firsthand on a daily basis. I mean Terry as our first Chair, blessed from above, you know, could not have been a better person. And others who... Gerry Dalton, I mean, not to name... not to take away from anyone, but Gerry took on the finance committee chair role, which again there was so much to get in place, you know. And many others, Catherine Slattery with the formation programs and... It was just really humbling. And Mary McDonald as our golden guru, you know, had such a depth of background in where it had all come from and so such wisdom to give. So, you know, the people, we were really, really lucky.

TERRY: And Kay talks about others but the background was... the backbone was Kay. Yeah.

GABRIELLE: Looking back now then, what are you proudest of? So 10 years on, we're now celebrating the 10 year anniversary, what are you proudest of or is it what you imagined?

KAY: At the dinner this year (2021) when Catherine finished and John Driscoll... I mean, John, enormous contributor and generous to a fault and wonderful with his legal expertise and he was always available if I needed to ask question, you know, in the legal field and so forth. And he spoke on his retirement from GSE. And his whole spirit and demeanour around the experience was how much he had gained and how it had enriched him as a person and so on. And in my experience of GSE on other occasions when people have left and so on, there's a theme that runs through that and, to me, that's a success.

And the PJP is an ecclesial community and we struggled in the beginning with, "What is that?" We understand the words, but, you know, what is that? And there was a lot of work went into grappling with our understanding of that and that first and foremost the assembly has to be a community of the church and understand itself as such and be in relationship with each other in that way. And Rodger Austin, instrumental in that.

But I think that's the big achievement. Because if you get that right, then hopefully the decisions that flow from that are the right ones or made for the right reasons and that flows hopefully down into the community or out into the school communities. So, I'd be proud of that, I think.

GABRIELLE: That's beautiful.

TERRY: I think another focus that we had right from the beginning was that sense that we need to build a solid foundation. And from the very beginning, we said that the foundation, every member required

formation in the tradition and in the the community and then in the aspect of the legality of the organisation etc. But the foundation of formation - and great emphasis was put on that and still is put on it - and the formation programs that were developed and while they will change and there will be different iterations of formation etc., formation as a focus, I think, was one of the really important aspects of those early days.

And that brought us into a lovely relationship with some of the highly competent, educated, beautiful women. Sr Elizabeth (Brennan), Sr Christine (Manning), particularly, the work they did with the assembly, with the governing council, with the principles. It was a most enriching time in any of those sessions that we had. It was, to me, these women who were so well versed in every aspect of the rule and of the scriptures etc., were so humble in the manner in which they invited us into it and then helped us along the way.

KAY: And the use of art and music and poetry within that. And Catherine Slattery included in that group.

TERRY: Yes.

KAY: The scholarship, as Terry said, but also that emotional or...

TERRY: Human connection.

KAY: Yeah, human connection of the beauty that was woven through what they did.

TERRY: I remember very early on Catherine with her slides, PowerPoint, for prayer or whatever. Words, too many words on that page. Take the words out. But she used the picture, she used the landscape or whatever to do the talking.

KAY: Terry and I, we're fond of our words. So we... and you would go, "There's too many words. There's too many words."

TERRY: And I think the other thing that, just when you... Kay said that, we worked as team, didn't we? The team was there. The governing council was a team, the assembly was team. It was harder for the assembly to come together in those very early years because we only met twice a year. And then for them to have that real understanding and sense... and I remember some of the assembly members saying, "This is hard to catch on to." But then when we also had assembly members as members of... company members for the schools, there was that connection there.

It's a complicated model, but once one gets into the model and understands it, it's very, very powerful because we've got the local, the community members there, the board members, the school, the local connection with GSE, we've got the broader assembly connection, and we've got the governing Council in that decision-making, authoritative area. The development of team and working as a team, was very strong.

KAY: There were no egos in it, were there, working through that process. People... you never felt people were defending their corner, so to speak. That's down to the Good Sams, I think. Like Mary McDonald and Elizabeth and Catherine and, you know, that sense of, "Well, we won't make that decision today. We'll come back later," you know, rather than, "Well, we've got to get this done."

GABRIELLE: Yep. Pull through.

KAY: Yeah. So, I think that was a real... that, as Terry said, I think that's a real strength. I suppose it goes back to those, sort of, criteria that we set out. Listen, being attentive, community, being focused on stewarding the story.

TERRY: Another thing that I feel really content about but also, you know, one wonders, the... you never know the future, is the calibre of the people who, as Kay mentioned, in the early days, the people who were the beginning teams. But now there's been 10 years, there's been change and the calibre of the people who are on the assembly, on the governing council, in our leadership roles, that's something... In some ways, you feel really proud that an organisation such as... a small organisation such as Good Samaritan Education, can attract those people to give of their time, their expertise for nothing, for no remuneration.

GABRIELLE: And I think attract is the right word, because people are attracted to this community, this sense of belonging and home, where they're willing to give of their time because they believe in this way of doing things and being part of, as John was saying in his retirement, it's what he got out of... I mean, yes, sure he put in lots of work but it's actually he was gaining something out of it too and it's just, it's the formation, it's the communio that is created in that.

TERRY: And I think that's why when the decision came, because we knew that executive had to change and it was done really in a considered manner as with, you know, governing council etc., to be able to, you know, from my perspective, to hand the reins to Moira, the right person for the role at the time now. How does that happen? There is a God and that God is very much, you know, walking, I think, with Good Samaritan Education.

GABRIELLE: As long as we keep listening. As long as we're still connected.

TERRY: That's right, That's right. Yes.

KAY: And are prepared, I think, to live with the lack of certainty and the, you know, the making of decisions in a discerning way, prayerfully, and having some faith that it will come right, you know. There are always going to be blind alleys that organisations go down and so on. But being open to recognise you're in a blind alley and make some other decision.

You know, it's the process of the discernment and trusting each other and so on that will enable the organisation to continue, because it's built on such, at one level, flimsy things, all of these volunteers and, you know, skeletons, administrative, organisational, team leadership.

I mean, for the executive director role, you know, having Leonie come along after me and so on. And now Jane, not that I know Jane, but from what I hear, great experience, great expertise.

Those things, as you say, probably don't happen by accident. You say, "Oh, we're lucky," but maybe not. It's hopefully the strength of the organisation and its philosophy.

GABRIELLE: It's also that remaining grounded in that amazing book of wisdom, that is the rule that... that is so the insights into humanity and how we rub people up the wrong way and how we actually can work as community if we keep grounded and connected to that, where... centuries have proven that that works...

KAY: That can work.

GABRIELLE: So we've got to be on the right track.

TERRY: Can I just say too, that one of the things that I was always so proud about was to walk into our schools. And now when I sit back and I look at not only the incredible dedication of principles and leadership teams within the schools, but that... that keeping alive the heritage, the Benedictine heritage and the Good Samaritan story.

And I actually have a grandniece, who's at Lourdes Hill, who loves the school, but she can tell me so many of the stories of the Sisters, and there's a statue of a sister sitting on a chair that she can tell me the story about it and why it's there. And I feel very proud.

KAY: The schools have carried on that tradition, haven't they, of heart and the symbolic transfer of the information that children pick up without being lectured about it. And that's always been a hallmark of the Good Samaritan schools. When I first started and visited the other schools, that's one of the things that struck me was the beauty. They were beautiful, you know, and cared for. You could see there was love and care in the schools and that's still like that. We've been very blessed with the principles, its key people.

TERRY: But I also think too that there have been some rough waves and...

GABRIELLE: Of course. You'd worry if there weren't a few.

TERRY: But they've been ridden, as it were, and worked through until we reach the gentle waters of the sandy shore, in some ways. And I think that's something that is important. Those things are happening and have happened but they're not, they haven't broken the organisation apart.

GABRIELLE: That's right. The strength of the community is shown when it's an adversity or in crisis or challenge, rather than that's easy when everything's going well.

Just starting to wrap up a bit now then. Do each of you - I'll put Terry on the spot first - do you have a favourite quote from the rule of Benedict?

TERRY: Well I do, and it is to listen with the ear of the heart, because that, to me, was the very thing that I had to do when I first was introduced to the organisation. I had to listen, listen, listen, because I hadn't been part... I wasn't imbued with, I didn't come with an understanding or a sense or whatever. So that those very first words in the rule... and I have to tell you, I read the rule before I even I went to that meeting, and I thought, "My God." In all honesty, that's what I thought. So to really understand and have that become part of my way of life... And it doesn't just pertain, of course, to Good Samaritan Education. It pertains to life in all its reality.

GABRIELLE: What about you, Kay, do you have a favourite?

KAY: There's sort of so many isn't there? You know, thinking about the schools, the one that often comes to mind is, you know, so that the strong have something to strive for and the weak have nothing to run from, and, I mean, that applies in life as well, the kind of individuality and diversity of that.

The one about the... learning from the youngest, you know, listening... the youngest often have the wisdom to give. I think that's applicable in life as well. They might be the youngest in years, but it could be the youngest in experience or some such thing, you know, that...

So I think the rule is, as you say, Terry, when you read it first cold and you go, "What?"

GABRIELLE: "What are they talking about?"

KAY: "How is this applicable?"

And then there's the one about, you know, only having half a bottle of wine or something. That's a good... it's very wise, very human, and it's about how you live together in community, you know, to... serving others before yourself at the table. It's so down to earth.

GABRIELLE: Being on the journey together, the path to Christ, is actually together.

KAY: That's right, yeah.

GABRIELLE: So just your last question ... what about Good Samaritan Benedictine charism gives you hope or inspiration for the future?

TERRY: I... I think the discernment that runs through the rule, the the manner in which discernment runs through the rule, it runs through the organisation, prayerful discernment in all of GSEs considerations now and into the future, if that remains a vital part of the organisation, then I would be ever hopeful that it will be a strong organisation embedded in that spirituality and in the story.

KAY: Yes, I agree. I think that's really, really important. I think there's so much in Benedictine... in Benedictine spirituality, and then through the Good Sams, that is recognition of humanity. You know, when you think the rule, you know, is from the 6th century, people were just as... had just as many good and not so good traits then as we see today. There's something in that if the formation is kept up and people are... because it's very different from the world as we live it today. We're very individual and, kind of, self-centred. So I think an organisation like GSE that has that Benedictine spirituality at its heart has to put time, energy, resources, into forming everyone that comes on board with it. And if that happens, then I think there's an understanding of humanity and a way that people can live and work together to reach out for the good of the community and others, then I think that's really... really hopeful, you know. Yeah, that would be my thing. I think this rule's got a lot to offer, the spirituality.

GABRIELLE: Yeah. Well, thank you so much both of you today for joining us and sharing the story of the, kind of, emergence of Good Samaritan Education, as it is today and the journey that it's taken us to get here in celebration of our ten years this year. So, thank you. And thank you for all of the work that you have been part of to bring that story into life.

KAY: Thanks Gabrielle.

TERRY: Thank you.

KAY: It's nice to reflect.

GABRIELLE: Well, I hope you enjoyed that interview as much as I did being there and I hope some of the warmth and the passion of these incredible women that have helped shape our story came across to you and I look forward to sharing more stories with you again soon on 'Communio Calling'.