



'In the footsteps of the sisters': Saints' Girls honours ordained women

This year 2022 marks 30 years since women were first ordained to the priesthood in the Anglican Church in Australia. General Synod approval came after years of intense controversy, legal challenges and media headlines.

Today the ministry and leadership of women priests are welcome in Adelaide and most dioceses.

St Peter's Girls is one of the pre-eminent schools in the diocese. Founded in 1894 by the Sisters of the Church, it has provided generations of girls with strong Christian teaching, a love of worship and role models of women in leadership.

It is no surprise then that Old Scholars of St Peter's and the Sisters' schools around Australia played a prominent role both in campaigning for the ordination of women and finding their own personal call to the ordained ministry.

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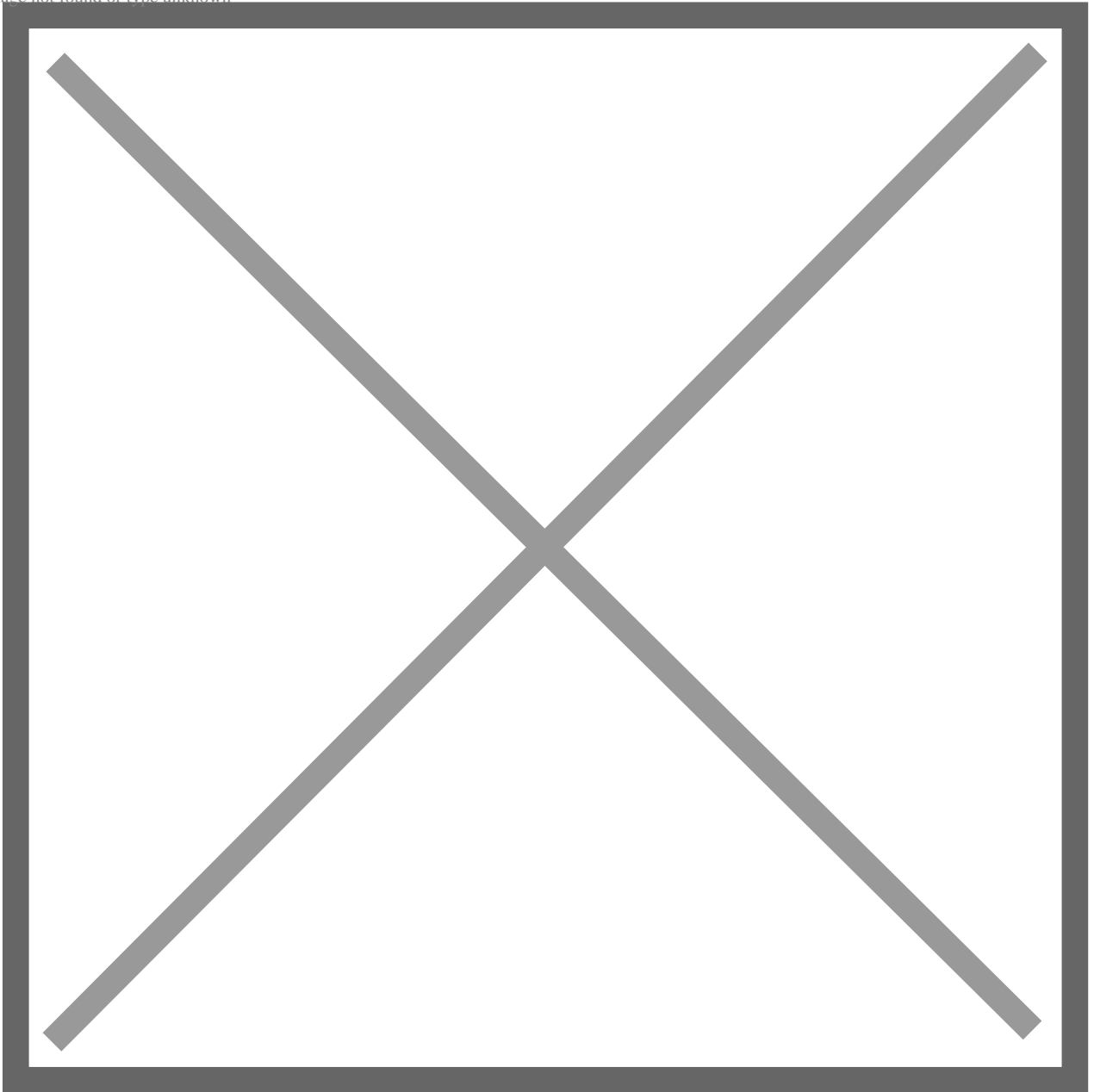


Display of Saints Girls about Old Scholars in ordained ministry and in the Movement for the Ordination of Women

Those from St Peter's Girls were honoured at a special service held by the Friends of the Founders called 'In the Footsteps of the Sisters' held in the school Chapel on 25 May.

Guest speaker, the Venerable Dr Ruth Mathieson, is one of six Saints' Girls ordained priest. She spoke to the girls, staff and guests about Mary Magdalene, first witness to Jesus's resurrection, and Phoebe, Priscilla and Aquila who were leaders in the early church.

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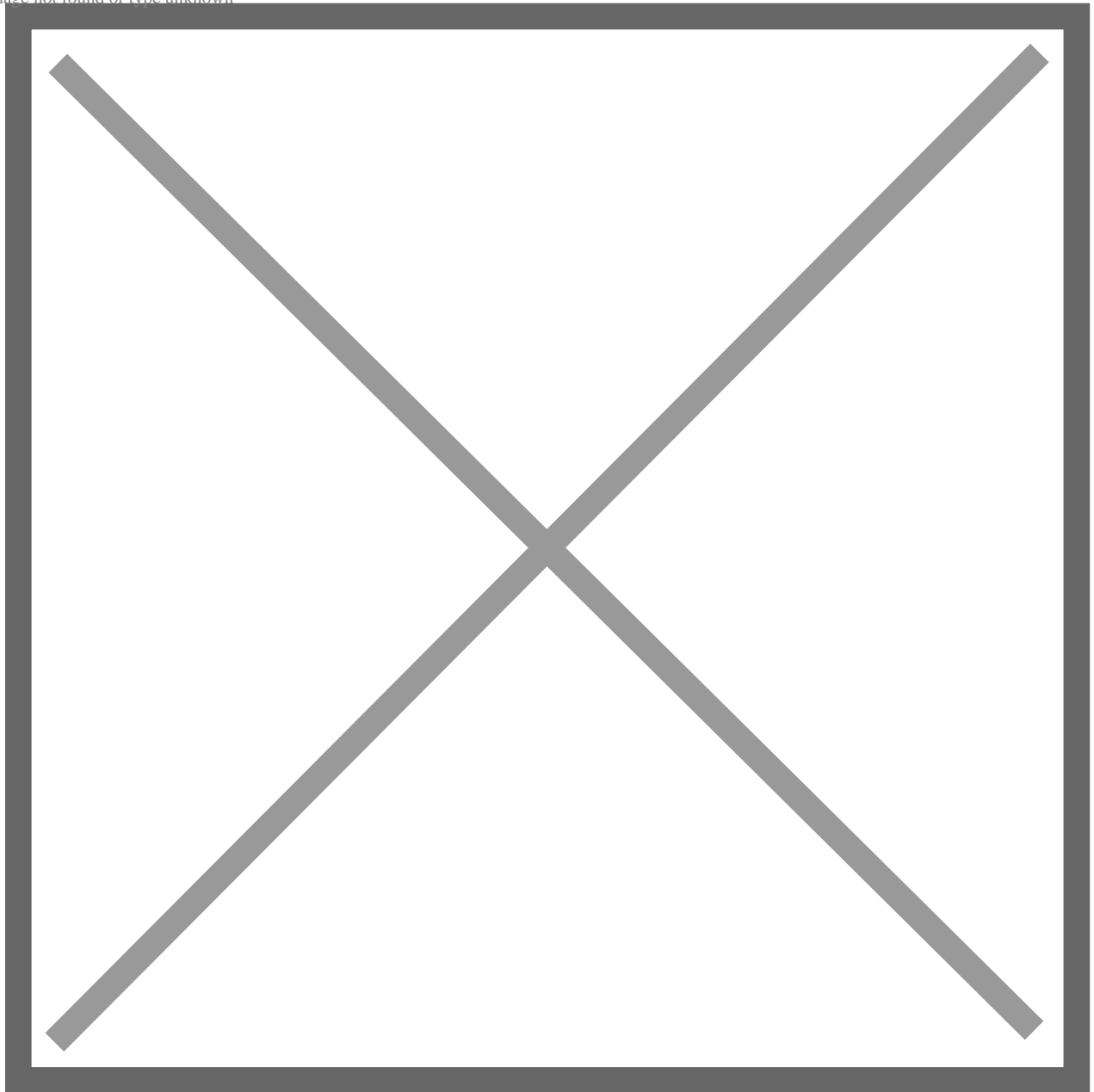
Saints Girls Old Scholars who worked for the ordination of women. Dr Janet Scarfe (MOW national president 1989-92) (left) and Sue-Henry Edwards (past MOW SA convenor)

She outlined the stories of the first women ordained priest in the Anglican communion, including Adelaide-born Alison Cheek. Looking back on her own school life, Ruth recalled the powerful impact of starting the day with chapel and the Sisters' example of leadership in a church environment.

For the service Ruth wore vestments of the late Reverend Michelle Chambers, another former St Peter's Girl. Also present were Old Scholars the Reverend Deirdre Ragless (who led the prayers) and the Reverend Dr Lesley Mclean.

Those unable to be present were Elisa Helen CSC, Provincial of the Sisters of the Church who leads a parish in Ballarat, and the Reverend Rachel Chapman, chaplain at St Andrew's School in Walkerville.

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Three Saints Girls Old Scholars who are priests in the diocese: Rev Dr Lesley McLean, Venerable Dr Ruth Mathieson and Rev Deirdre Ragless

St Peter's Old Scholars were also prominent figures in the Movement for the Ordination of Women, the high profile and influential lobby group. Sue Henry-Edwards was a convener of MOW in South Australia. Dr Janet Scarfe was MOW national president during the height of the controversy. She and Old Scholar and MOW Sydney member Dr Elaine Lindsay co-edited *Preachers Prophets and Heretics: Anglican Women's Ministry* (NewSouth, 2012), a collection of essays by key players, academics and commentators commemorating the 20th anniversary of the ordinations.

As Cassandra Moore, president of the Friends of the Founders, said the school community 'honours all

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Saints Girls who have fought for the right of women and girls to have their God-given gifts and talents recognised.'

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