



UNION OF OLD ST MONICANS UK NEWSLETTER

EDITION 2, JULY 2025

Editorial

Welcome to the July 2025 edition of the Union of Old St Monicans UK Newsletter!

Our newsletter editions will be published twice yearly in January and July. We launched our first newsletter in January 2025 and the feedback from our readers was very positive and encouraging. We now have 16 subscribers who are not St Monican Union members, that's a great achievement. This edition highlights some golden qualities and incredible work of Sister Frances Clare OHP, one of the pioneering nuns of the Order of the Holy Paraclete (OHP), the Union's ongoing support to the seven OHP Institutions in Ghana, updates on UK activities and up and coming events. Sister Frances Clare's profile was provided in the main by her nephew: Mr R Eldeman, one of our patrons.

Sister Frances Clare OHP - *The Silent Headmistress!*

Sister Frances Clare OHP was born Clara Edelman in Westcliff-on-Sea in 1910. Her orthodox Jewish parents hailed from Polish Russia (now Lithuania) and had emigrated to England to escape persecution and build a new life.

Tragically, when Clara was only four, her mother died of tuberculosis. She, her father and older half-brother Louis, moved to Kilburn to be close to her auntie Zirol who helped to bring up the motherless children.

Clara obtained a degree in languages at London University including a Certificate in Education – and looked after her father until his death in 1941.

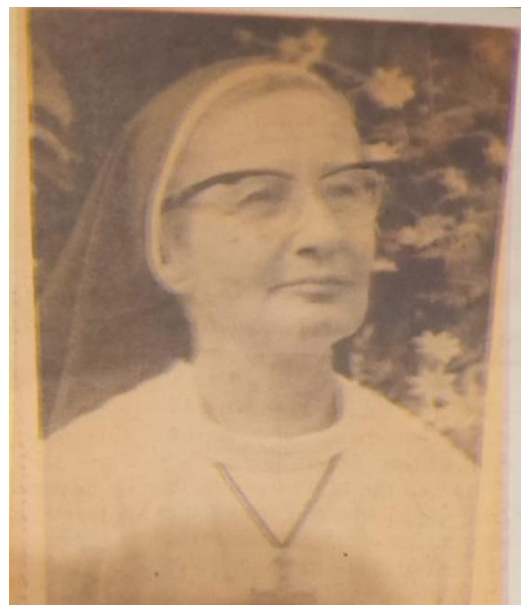
Like her brother before her, she converted to Christianity, and in 1945 after teaching at a boy's school in Wolverhampton, she joined the staff of St Hilda's School. In 1948, she was accepted into the Order of the Holy Paraclete and took on the name: Sister Frances Clare.

Then in 1951, only 7 months after her Profession, Mother Margaret (Mother Superior) chose her for the Order's pioneering work in the then Gold Coast (Ghana). There she became Headmistress of St Monica's Secondary School in Ashanti Mampong, a position she held for the next 21 years.

At this time the Secondary School and Training College were run as one institution, and Sister Frances Clare joined just as they were being separated into secondary and teacher training.

It was a time of political turmoil: first, this covered the period just *before* and then just *after* Dr Kwame Nkrumah's long struggle for independence. There were periods without electricity or even water; sometimes food was scarce and she, in person, went on foot to the local farmers to beg for supplies to feed her pupils. Undaunted, she fought on in her mission to develop St Monica's into a first-class educational institution – infused with Christian values - for the neglected girls of Ghana.

From a school of 150 pupils, she set-in house-training improvements which made St Monica's one of the foremost Girls' Secondary Schools in the country - with numbers increasing under her watch to



450 and more. Frances Clare also became ‘The OHP Provincial’ and regularly travelled to oversee the progress of the sister schools in Accra and Cape Coast.

Sister Frances Clare had a lifelong love for drama and even the King of Ashanti (Asantehene) attended her theatrical productions! Although her devoted pupils remember her mostly as the Headmistress who never raised her voice; who always went the extra mile for them; and who, with her elegant posture walked so silently that pupils couldn’t hear her coming up behind them!

After she left Ghana in 1973, she made an outstanding contribution in the field of ecumenism, visiting and developing links with religious communities across Europe and helping to reconcile the religious traditions of East and West.

Frances Clare died aged 92, on 29th December 2002 after suffering from Alzheimer’s for over a decade. At her funeral at St Hilda’s Priory, Whitby, Sister Barbara Maud who had been a close colleague at Ashanti Mampong, ended her eulogy with the words: “I can’t sum up all her golden qualities, except to say that for her *‘the readiness was all’*”.

Ric Edelman (Patron) June 2025

BRIEF INPUT BY GUEST EDITORIAL MEMBER

I have had the privilege of being personally impacted by the different strands of our Alma Mater’s work within the St Monican ambit. After my sixth form, in 1965, I was lucky to be invited to stand in as pupil teacher for one of the teachers at St Monica’s Primary School as she was going on maternity leave. That was one of my close encounters with the nuns. Not having attended St Monica’s primary school, I was amazed at the order, management and oversight of the school! I was also awed by their dedication, even at the primary school level. Though most of my sisters had attended the Cape Coast St Monica’s school, I had not realised the caring depth of the nuns in their role as teachers. Of course, as a student at the secondary school in Ashanti Mampong, I had met Sister Elizabeth, my Aglionby House mistress. I had also even earlier met Sister Frances Clare, first during my Common Entrance interview, then during my seven years in the secondary school. She was one of the most motherly human beings I’d ever met. But perhaps my most impactful encounter was with Sister Barbara Maude, whom one of my classmates kindly and in humour though unintentionally nick named **Mena Barbs!** Unintentionally done through a cartoon of a bespectacled nun with the caption ‘Mena Barbs’ written underneath. Unfortunately, the teacher in whose class this was done pinned the cartoon on the school notice board, unintentionally giving it overwhelming publicity! And caught on it did! Years later after graduating university and going back to teach there, I found the name persisted!

There, as a recent student, then transformed into a teacher, I was privileged to sit in the same staff room with my recent teachers. There I saw another side of these dedicated women, who mothered without bearing children. I was humbled and awed by their dedication. Sister Barbara Maude had nurtured my love of literature and to this day am grateful for the journey into reading she fed and encouraged in my life. Recently, as I climbed the podium to receive my Doctor of Philosophy degree, I was thankful for the journey that started in 1959 at St Monica’s, and how far it had stretched. On behalf of all alumni of St Monica’s varied institutions, I say a very big thank you to the OHP, with most sincere appreciation for the absolutely awesome journeys, they made to ensure that some of us would get quality education. May God continue to bless us all: the products of the OHP handiwork. God bless the continued work of your hands scattered around your beloved Ghana, our mother land. Hurrah to the OHP legacy!

Dr Margaret Baffour-Awuah (nee Mensah) Guest Editor

For more information about the work of the OHP, [visit their website here.](#)

The Union's Achievements and Support to the Seven Institutions in Ghana

Over the years, the Union has successfully raised funds for refurbishments, repairs, and logistical support for the seven OHP institutions. The financial support that we provided to each OHP institution in Ghana has indirectly benefitted the whole school. Our recent donations went to St. Monica's School (Kindergarten, Basic and Junior High) - Cape Coast. It was used to repair the roof and some collateral damage caused by the roof leakage: smudged wall paint, damaged floorboards, etc. Full details of donations for other refurbishing work done in the other OHP institutions will be published in the next edition.

UNION OF OLD ST MONICANS (UK) AND PATRONS

The Union of Old St Monicans (UK) is a vibrant community of past students from the seven OHP institutions (established by the OHP Anglican Nuns in the Gold Coast (Ghana)). The 'Union' was formed in 1989 by a group of past students from the seven institutions, living in London, with the aim of reviving friendships, supporting the institutions, and upholding our motto: **Each for All and All for God.**

For details on the History of the St Monica's institutions, please visit our website [here.](#)

Patrons

Our patrons include esteemed professionals who support our mission through fundraising and advocacy:

- **Revd Canon Jacob Kyei-Baffour (Union Chaplain)**
- **The OHP Nuns**
- **Mr Harry Quainoo**
- **Supt. Keith Fraser**
- **Dr and Mrs Emmanuel Akuffo**
- **Prof Herbert Blankson and Lady Lily**
- **Mrs Georgina Patience Bempah**
- **Mr Kofi Asante**
- **Mr Kwaw Elliott**
- **Ric Edelman**

Chairlady, Secretary and Vice Chairladies

- **Chairlady:** Barbara Ntow-Boahene
- **Vice Chairladies:** Patina Blankson and Sandra Yaghoubi
- **Secretary:** Doris Bonsu

Meetings

We meet four times a year and our Annual General Meeting (AGM) takes place in April. The Union Executives, meet two weeks prior to each of the Union meetings. The in-person meetings and services take place at Christ Church and St. Stephen's, Battersea Park Road, London SW11 3BY.

January: Zoom
April: Zoom
July: In-person
October: In-person



LITURGICAL SERVICES, EVENTS AND MEETINGS

We hold a Carol Service (Nine Lessons and Carols) each December, a prayer meeting every first Friday of the month, a ‘Lenten Jar’ fundraising challenge (each member raises at least a pound a day during Lent) and a Foundress Service every May. This year the Thanksgiving Service was held on 4th May and was very well attended by St Monicans and alumni from other schools. It was a vibrant get together with lots of positive energy.

The Homily was on “Jesus is Love.” The question for reflection was – “Do you love Jesus?”



Thanksgiving Service Held on 4th May 2025

Events

The Union organizes various events to foster community spirit and raise funds for the schools. We have organised talks once or twice a year on specific topics presented by professionals. On 28th June 2025, Edem Amewovor presented on zoom a talk on – Wills, Trust and Lasting Power of Attorney. The feedback indicated it was facilitated and presented brilliantly. It was educational, useful and insightful touching on very important issues. Union members attended in great numbers; it was a success!

Our welfare team visits the elderly, physically challenged and bereaved Union members regularly.

The Ghanaian Schools Alumni programme of activities for the year is shared with us. We ensure our Union’s representation as best as we can, to support alumni group events.

UP AND COMING EVENTS

- The 100 years centenary celebration of the arrival of the OHP nuns in the Gold Coast (Ghana) in 1926 will be launched in November 2025 in Ghana. The climax will be in November 2026. Activities here in the UK will include:
 - a sponsored walk (further details will follow in our next Newsletter),
 - a trip to Whitby to visit the OHP nuns,
 - a talk on Girl Child Education (via zoom),
 - a Thanksgiving service to celebrate
 - a dinner and dance to complete the events.

DONATE

Voluntary contributions can be made to our Union to support and maintain our website. We are always grateful. Details are below and on our website. [Union of Old St Monicans website](#)

Payable to: Union of Old St Monicans UK

Account No: 85695968

Sort Code: 30-96-26

Reference: Name/Website

We hope you have enjoyed this edition of our newsletter and look forward to updating you with future achievements.

Warm regards,

The Editorial Team

Union of Old St Monicans, UK

Revd Canon Jacob Owusu Kyei-Baffour

Margaret Baffour Awuah (Guest Editor)

Barbara Ntow-Boahene

Patina Blankson (Lead Member)

Sandra Yaghoubi

Angelina Elliott

Christie Obeng-Brown

Dinah Anyemedu

Irene Boakye

16B Shardeloes Road, London SE14 6NZ

Website: www.unionofoldstmonicans.co.uk org - Email:

unionofoldstmonicans@gmail.com

Tel: 07949764986, 07534275120 & 07849461120

UK Charity number: 1221 1 8