

**LADIES' COLLEGE OLD GIRLS' ASSOCIATION**  
**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2020**  
**13<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2021**

**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

Patroness Mrs. Easha Speldewinde, Vice Patroness Mrs Deepika Dassanaiké, Manager of the School Mrs Leonie Seneviratne, OGA Representative on the Governing Body Mrs Maneesha Peiris, Auditor Ms Chandrika Wijeratne and members, good morning and welcome to the 111<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Ladies' College Old Girls' Association. It is wonderful to have so many of you with us today.

As you all know, the global health crisis wrought by the COVID 19 virus cast a shadow over most of the past year. Although we tried, on two occasions in October and November 2020, to hold our AGM in the traditional manner, we were unable to do so due to circumstances beyond our control, and we have, accordingly, been compelled to resort to a virtual AGM. As with all trials, however, the pandemic has given us opportunities to adapt, push our boundaries past our comfort zone and tap into reserves of strength and fortitude we may not have known we have.

I am conscious of not taking up too much of your time, given that the activities for the period from October 2019 to date have been covered in detail in the Secretary's report which was circulated to you via email along with the Treasurer's report, however, I would like to run through the highlights for this period, reiterating that we have always striven to cater to a very diverse membership whose members range from the age of 20 to over 90, and to make events and activities accessible and engaging to a cross-section of our membership.

***Christmas Fellowship Dinner***

The LC OGA's annual Christmas fellowship dinner was held on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2019 at the Shangri-La Hotel, Colombo. The choice of the Shangri-La Hotel, Colombo (one of the targets of the Easter Sunday attacks of 2019) as the venue of the Christmas dinner was deliberate and signified a message of indomitable positivity and hope which we hoped would resonate not only within the LC community but more widely as well. We were pleased to donate Rs.200,000 from the proceeds of the event to Caritas Seth Sarana,

which is involved in furthering the educational goals of children affected by the 2019 Easter Bombings.

The LC OGA chose a traditional Christmas theme for the celebration and 400 guests were present. There was something for everyone at this fellowship event, including carols, uproarious games and an unprecedented number of prizes. The Shangri-La Hotel, Colombo served up a scrumptious Christmas dinner with all the trimmings, and principal sponsors, Spa Ceylon and Cargills ensured that guests left laden with goodies. A really marvelous time was had by all present, making all the preparation put in by the Committee over the preceding months well worth the effort.

### ***Seniors Lunch***

The annual Seniors' Christmas Lunch was held on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2019 at the Old Hall. It was a lovely afternoon of fellowship for the most senior members of the LC alumni community. The event was organised jointly by LC Cares and the Ladies' College Old Girls' Association. The program included carols, games and a surprise appearance by Santa. Our guests left beaming after a morning of fun and fellowship with their sister LCites. Events like this are so important to keep our wonderful senior members engaged and actively participating in OGA activities. A special thank you to LC Cares for their help with organizing this event and for looking after our guests.

### ***120<sup>th</sup> Founders' Day Celebrations 2020 – Service, Brunch and Pop Up Market***

Last year marked the school's 120th year and the Ladies' College Old Girls' Association held its Founders' Day celebrations on 29<sup>th</sup> February 2020. The traditional morning service of thanksgiving, presided over by Reverend Melvin de Silva, was held in The Chapel of the Hope of the World. The LC OGA Choir, directed by Ms Sureka Amerasinghe and comprising approximately 50 Old Girls, sang three joyful anthems which reverberated throughout the Chapel.

The service was followed by a celebratory brunch in a festively decorated Old Hall. There was much lively banter and chatter as old friends reunited to reminisce and celebrate. A giant birthday cake (created for the occasion by an Old Girl) was cut to commemorate the occasion. The Founders' Day event was attended by eight members of the Kandy Branch of the LC OGA, who made a special trip to join the celebrations in Colombo.

In a first for the LC OGA, a Pop Up Market was held in the front lawn outside the Mabel Simon Hall during the morning. Over 30 Old Girl entrepreneurs displayed their wares, offering everything from gourmet food, to handmade coasters and stationery items, artwork, sustainable alternatives to plastic items, jewellery, beauty products, antiques and apparel. The Pop Up Market was a roaring success, with many of the vendors selling out of their wares during the morning. It was fabulous to see the creative talents of our Old Girls reflected in such diverse enterprises.

### ***Supporting Ladies' College***

The Principal invited the Executive Committee of the LC OGA for a meeting with the Principal, Vice Principal, Chaplain and Representatives of the Board of Governors to discuss the process adopted by the school in relation to the selection of student leaders (such as prefects, sports captains and committee leaders). Following this meeting, and on the invitation of the Principal, the Executive Committee put together a subcommittee to formulate suggestions for guidelines to be adopted by the school in relation to the selection process to ensure fairness, transparency and accountability. This subcommittee considered the issues at hand, studied models adopted by other private schools in Sri Lanka and drafted a set of suggestions and guidelines which were presented to the Principal for consideration.

### ***Online / virtual engagement***

Following the outbreak of COVID-19 in Sri Lanka in March 2020, the consequent curfew and subsequent restrictions imposed by the Government on gatherings, we have been unable to have any physical events for the past year. Undeterred by this, and determined to keep a sense of connection alive amongst the LC alumni community, the Executive Committee of the LC OGA launched a number of initiatives via its social media platforms this year.

### ***LC Star Files and She Means Business series***

LC-ites are accomplishing great things and taking enormous strides in diverse arenas. The purpose of the 'LC Star Files' initiative is to showcase these exceptional ladies and celebrate their achievements while giving our members a glimpse of the personality behind the name.

The 'She Means Business' series features our LC-ite entrepreneurs, highlighting the fascinating businesses and brands they have created and giving us insight into their entrepreneurial journeys.

### *The Ruby Room – LC OGA Virtual Book Club*

In another first during the lockdown period, the LC OGA launched The Ruby Room, a virtual book club. We have had an enthusiastic response to this endeavor with readers from around the globe tuning in for two lively discussions which were moderated by Manique Wijewardane – Bloom and Shalini Wickramasuriya respectively. We hope to organize further sessions of The Ruby Room in the coming year.

### *Virtual Demonstrations*

Prompted by the surge of interest in home-cooking during the lockdown period, the LC OGA streamed two live action cook-alongs hosted by Jovanka Jayaweera of Big Bird Delights and Ruwanthi Fernando of Roo's Deli, and broadcast a third, a Thai Pongal special, by Adirupini Tyagaraja.

A fourth demonstration on DIY Christmas décor was conducted by Piyusha De Silva, in the lead up to Christmas.

### *Christmas Jingle Jam*

To round off the year, a group of choristers from the LC OGA Choir got together one evening to record an impromptu Christmas Jingle Jam featuring some well-loved Christmas carols. We hope this program brought a little festive cheer to the end of a challenging year.

We have had a wonderfully enthusiastic response to our online initiatives and hope to build upon these in the coming year.

### ***121<sup>st</sup> Founders' Day Celebrations 2021***

With the pandemic continuing into 2021, the Executive Committee conceived the idea for and coordinated the production of a celebratory video to mark the school's 121<sup>st</sup> Founders' Day, as we felt this would be accessible to more members, including those residing overseas. The program included a reading, prayer of thanksgiving and a selection of hymns sung by the LC OGA Choir. Despite the obvious risks, 10 members of the LC OGA

Choir volunteered to meet and record a few hymns for this video. The highlight of the video was a special performance by a virtual Chorale of Old Girl choristers from across the globe of *Messiah* which was arranged by Sureka Amerasinghe and first recorded for the CD produced by the Ladies' College choir for the school's centenary celebrations. Mrs Christine Perera, who nurtured a love of music and singing in generations of Old Girls, also made a surprise appearance, to the delight of viewers.

The Founders' Day video premiered on Youtube on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2021 and was watched by Old Girls all over the world. Perhaps because of the relative isolation in which we have all been living for close to a year now, the Founders' Day video, with its messages of faith, trust, hope and resilience and its highlighting of the Ladies' College community as "One Family Unbroken" resonated deeply with our members and sparked a very emotional response.

### ***Donations to the school***

A number of donations were made the LC OGA since October 2019, despite our inability to organize any physical events for the past year and details of these may be found in the Secretary's report.

### ***Thanks***

Before I close, I would like to thank my wonderful committee for their enthusiasm and hard work, their loyalty and friendship. It is thanks to your efforts that we have been able to achieve as much as we have during a year of challenges which were completely unforeseen at the time I took up this role.

I must also make special mention of our Patroness, Mrs Eesha Speldewinde and Vice Patroness Mrs Deepika Dassanaiké – I am grateful for the partnership between the school and the LC OGA which is built on mutual respect and for your support for all LC OGA endeavours.

Thank you also to the school's administrative officers and members of the minor staff who have been obliging with the LC OGA's use of school premises for our various events and activities.

**Close**

In the 110 year history of the Ladies' College Old Girls' Association, our beautiful island has survived two World Wars, a thirty year civil war, countless terrorist attacks and a tsunami. We Sri Lankans are a resilient people, and I'm confident that with the Grace of God, this difficult time, too, shall pass. The Ladies' College Old Girls' Association will continue to keep the faith, living by our school's motto to turn this period of uncertainty into a time of opportunity and growth.

"THIS IS OUR VICTORY EVEN OUR FAITH"